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I WORK IN A SECONDARY  
MODERN SCHOOL

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# I WORK IN A SECONDARY MODERN SCHOOL

by

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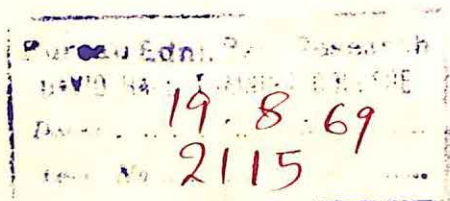
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To

MY WIFE





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My debt to my staff and to the children of my school is made clear in my text and is emphasised here. I wish also to record my thanks to Dr. J. H. Higginson for continued encouragement and helpful discussion while I was writing my script, and to H. Oldman, Esq., M.A., for reading it when it was completed. Neither is responsible for the opinions expressed in my book.

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## FOREWORD

READERS OF *I Work in a Secondary Modern School*, be they young men or women savouring their first teaching practice, or overseas educators trying to get a lucid account of the new look in secondary education, will find an optimistic interpretation of a modern school's problems. The author recognises that his school is not set in the grimness of one of our industrial cities, and makes no claim that anyone else should practise his methods, but the picture he draws has a significance greater than his modesty implies. When, in the 1830's, an enquiring American visited England to report on the state of secondary education here, he came up against a difficulty that he had not met with elsewhere. There was no general system of secondary education. He protested somewhat because he had to make so many individual visits in order to get:

'a description of particular institutions. . . . On account of the absence of system, more time is consumed, both in actual examination and in description, than is required in countries where schools are organised according to a general plan. There, a few schools give a complete idea of all the variations which the system allows, while here, the number of special cases must be multiplied, according to the variety in the ideas of individuals, or associations, who have charge of secondary institutions.'

As I read the manuscript of this book I was reminded

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of Alexander Bache's investigation, for this American observer penetrated the essence of the English way and purpose of schooling—the creation of numerous individualising communities, each in its own right, inspired according to the vision of those to whose pastoral care they are entrusted. *I Work in a Secondary Modern School* gives an example of how vitally that fundamental principle of English education is still alive, despite increasing State intervention. We now have in England more secondary schools than ever before and, faced with the varying stages of growth which they present, the schoolmaster's faith about his job is challenged to the uttermost. He has every temptation to find support in some form of standardisation, perhaps by recourse to leaving examinations, or by acceptance of the idea that his school falls within a system dubbed 'tri-partite', whence automatically follows a set of assumptions on which a course of education is constructed for the 'secondary modern type', also known as the once, twice or even thrice 'creamed'. Melvin Kneebone writes as a schoolmaster who has not lost faith. After thirty years of secondary experience, twenty of them in the grammar school and ten years as Headmaster working in this secondary modern school, he says, characteristically, as he looks at his assembled school 'Incentives? Here before us are five hundred.'

This book brings us then, a statement of tested experience that has the hallmark of some of the best things in the English tradition. In other respects, it is unmistakably a child of our times, not least in the picture it conveys of the manifold relationships which to-day centre on a secondary school. For the author his school is no closed chamber: he knows, and appreciates, the



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foundations laid for him and his staff in the primary schools; he recognises the importance of the links with parents, governors, employers and officers of the local Education Authority, not only for administrative smoothness, but because this working together is essential to the shaping of a democratic society at large; nor does he fail to take into account that his pupils will soon emerge as young wage-earners; and, through its relationships with training colleges and university, the school makes a steady contribution to the next generation of teachers. Indeed, the chapter on 'Teacher Training', with its account of training at three levels, is full of wise insight and its suggestive comments are none the less telling because of their gentle statement.

One of the best tributes to Mr. Kneebone's belief in his work and his faith in his staff is to be seen in the open house he gave to candidates for the Diploma in Secondary Education of the University of Leeds Institute of Education. These men and women, practising teachers of maturer years, are required to make a searching study of a secondary school: it needs courage for a Headmaster to have them in his school, though the common testimony of both sides is how valuable the resulting discussions can be. Those who thus had the privilege of studying the school from the inside, spoke warmly of the vision they had gained and of the frankness with which their queries had been met; they were refreshed to find enthusiasm but no complacency. They learnt, as did their tutor, a corroboration of the truth given by a farsighted Englishman to American teachers almost a century after Alexander Bache discovered that our schools were a multiplicity of 'special cases'. Lecturing on the outlook in secondary education

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in 1930, Sir Michael Sadler told his audience in New York City:

'This I believe to be a time of radical venturesomeness in education . . . for offering courses to which young people are drawn not by their easiness but by reason of their inherent interest and of the enjoyment which they give to those who strenuously endeavour to excel.'

Venturesomeness, informed by exacting affection, is the keynote of the work in this secondary modern school, and in the present unrest in secondary education it is an inspiration to behold.

*University of Leeds*

J. H. HIGGINSON

## PREFACE

WE ARE COMING to the end of the first effective decade of Secondary Modern Education. It is a comparatively short time. We need to stand back fifty years at least from such revolutionary changes to see fairly the intention of our work. It is far too early to talk about the result. That it should be necessary to attempt an interim defence is a measure of the misunderstanding at all levels of the kind of education possible at the secondary modern stage. Hopes held and generalisations made on such slight acquaintance with the size of the job facing us were bound to prove vain and false.

There was not enough preparation of the minds of parents. It could have been done by the wartime method of simple straightforward explanation, posters, pamphlets, talks and broadcasts. Perhaps no one knew enough about what was intended. Vagueness at the top levels is catching at all. The result was that the word 'secondary' which had from fifty years of experience come to mean good grammar school education leading direct to jobs in the professions, business and industry, was hopelessly misinterpreted. Even yet parents ask if children take G.C.E. examinations before they leave us at fifteen. Those who imagined foolishly that a miracle could happen overnight are often dismayed when they see what it is possible to accomplish. That really immense strides have been made in the last ten years does not impress them. They were so much out of touch with standards of education to begin with that they now find it impossible to give credit to minor miracles.



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Political fever was the reason for some of the hot air given off and the resulting mirages. Now it has cooled a little and we can let it shimmer round the comprehensive schools while we look at our present position. That it is an uneasy one no one can deny. The secondary modern school bogey disturbs the minds of children under eleven and those who teach them.

Early in each year schools make their reports on ten- and eleven-year-old children and conduct examinations authorised by their local committees. Months beforehand parents are writing to the papers betraying anxiety in every line. Leading articles appear. Special articles are commissioned, sometimes seeking to explain how the system works and how reasonable it all is, and sometimes creating apprehension by sensational accounts of secondary modern school children's behaviour and low standards of work. The more highly coloured accounts are generally discredited, as they were in London in 1955, but some of the mud sticks.

The radio and television services no doubt hope to be fair in their programmes, but only one conclusion could be drawn from a number of interviews with parents and children conducted in November, 1955. A bright group of boys and girls were shown in their junior schools being questioned by a television commentator. It was all rather like asking the teams how they felt on the eve of the cup tie or test match. Would they win or lose? If they lost it would be the secondary modern course for them. The impression was enforced by interviews with parents. Their anxiety was not concealed. They hoped for grammar school places, often a fantastic, unrealisable hope. Then the camera took in a boy and a girl in a new secondary modern school,

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a brief and inexpressibly sad interview. These were the losers, not expressly stated, of course, but very strongly implied. What were their hopes? They might be considered for commercial or junior technical work at thirteen. And what of the school they would leave, the secondary modern school? What was it trying to do with the 70 per cent of the population? No mention was made at all.

We can hardly grumble if a reviewer in a Yorkshire paper, describing a book about rumbustious boys, writes that they come from 'a secondary modern school, that *bête noire* of middle-class parents'. We cannot grumble if parents worry junior school teachers or pay for special coaching to avoid the slur of having their children at secondary modern schools, when local authorities trying to work the system and seeking to pass on the truth about standards and provision are either not understood or else disregarded. We cannot grumble at the reviewer or at the parents because what has been done to help them to understand is not enough. Where local authorities and teachers surely can complain is at the lack of experience and penetration of those who write about the part played by secondary modern schools in the whole educational pattern of the country.

Many of these writers specialise in long shots or sudden swoops. They do not attempt close views of long duration. Consequently their writing consists of superior theorising, beautifully chosen quotations from similar theorists from classical to modern times, but no significant detail. They do not know the work that goes on in the secondary modern school and are not qualified to assess its worth. They usually think of good pupils in

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grammar schools, about 50 per cent, and cannot bring into focus any form of education below that level. If they could they would hardly advocate examinations as an educational factor in a secondary modern school.

If we have found no book that presents a fair picture of the secondary modern school we must not complain, for the pens that generalised about our aims, organisation and objects are now doing the same about comprehensive schools, almost before the children have taken their places. There is room in education still for experiment. Prejudging issues only confuses them. In ten years those who have taught in comprehensive schools will know how they have done.

We were founded in 1948. We are certain that the experiences described in the following pages represent truthfully what many schools have faced in seeking to take root on rough land and in looking for a *raison d'être* to satisfy themselves and to confound those who regard the secondary modern school only as a dumping ground for pupils not capable of being accommodated in grammar, technical or commercial schools. We cannot hope for the social prestige that comes from impressive examination results. We believe nevertheless that we can do a first-rate job in educating children who cannot follow starkly academic courses. To that end we develop our school community. We seek teachers with faith in their work. We ask parents and all educationists interested in the whole field to consider from the following pages what it is we are trying to do and to decide whether it is worth while.

R. M. T. KNEEBONE



# I

## THE FIRST MOTION

MANY HEADMASTERS have now been faced happily with the searching problem of beginning a new life in a new building. In 1948 we looked from an old building to a new, we considered our setting, we thought of the junior schools in our area, we took out our schemes of work and looked ahead. We wanted to do justice to our opportunity because we believed that secondary modern education offered a new chance to pupils who had only recently been required to stay at school until they were fifteen. We marked the current enthusiasms for activities, projects and freedom of expression in Physical Education no less than in Art, Handwork and Writing. We noted the whirling messages from the educational sibyls. We decided upon our course.

Two years earlier when word had come that building was to begin on a new site on the western outskirts of the city we looked round the solid building in which we had been housed since our own school had been partially destroyed in 1942 by a bomb. The ten classrooms with their central hall stood above an infants' and a junior school with nearly 250 children in each. The four staircases each had two rather shallow wash basins. The use of the asphalt school yard had been staggered during playtimes. The Science laboratory and Woodwork shop were across the yard. Girls travelled to a

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Housecraft centre and boys to a Metalwork shop at different ends of the city. School dinners were served in the junior school hall. Playing fields were awkwardly placed. Many of the children came to school on private buses operated by the school as we were outside the home area.

'They built too well fifty years ago,' said the chairman of the Education Committee as we looked at the sturdy, old building still capable of giving good service. We were saying good-bye to it and going back into our own district. The junior school that had remained in the bombed building was now so large that it needed the rooms used previously for seniors. A new school on 17½ acres of ground was to be the first of the buildings undertaken under the city's development plan.

It was intended to serve a district that was growing rapidly. Acomb village, its green, its church (and buildings nearby) reminded us of the mellowed, quiet character of village life and there too, and at Poppleton Road, were the terraced houses of workers who had established standards of craftsmanship and skills, learnt and developed in the railway works, factories and offices within comfortable cycling distance. They represented a high standard of working class homes. Then came between the wars an increasing number of suburban dwellings and after 1948 an ever growing number of housing estates meant to help returning soldiers establish homes and relieve the pressure on crowded city houses.

We were determined to catch the imagination of those children who would be the first seniors to use the new school. We kept a day to day diary of building progress, maintained by a rota of visitors who went up to see the clerk of works and soon became recognised as official

## THE FIRST MOTION

visitors. We worked in visits to neighbouring housing estates so that pupils were familiar with their structure and equipment and would see where some of our new school population would live. We planned a series of studies of each part of the school as it grew, so that all became used to observing the materials used, the method of construction and the way in which water, gas and electricity were provided. But our school was only part of the whole educational plan for the city so we set to work to find out what schools already existed, how they had come into being and how the City Council went about the business of creating new schools.

With the good will of the several schools we sent out our senior pupils, two by two, often in their own time to avoid insurance and supervision difficulties, armed with lists of questions and drawing paper for simple plans of the school to be studied. They came back with useful information about independent schools, voluntary schools representing various denominations and schools of each type run by the local authority. They compared their findings with that given in books and papers from the Public Library and Education Office about the foundation and character of the schools they had visited. All kinds of surprising detail intrigued the children apart from the usual interest in visiting schools that had always seemed to them inaccessible. An important result was the return visit made by some schools to us.

The school governors naturally heard of our preparations for moving school and offered to help. The chairman answered questions posed by the children concerning the composition of the Education Committee and the City Council that had passed the building



## THE FIRST MOTION

plans. They asked about school dinners, playing fields, special classrooms, film strip projectors, facilities for drying clothes, whether a Youth Club would operate on the new premises and many other questions betraying their own special interests. The chairman of the Education Committee told them about negotiations with the Ministry of Education and then staggered them completely by telling them what educating each one of them would cost.

With such visits and visitors we had soon acquired enough material to make it worth while to invite parents to hear about our new school. Boys and girls presented their study of the history of York schools and of the various parts of construction of our new school with models of such things as steel work and cavity walls, and plans of all the services laid on to the school and of the facilities which the new rooms would offer. Scale models and drawings were impressive and the spoken explanation was reasonably assured before an appreciative adult audience.

The children knew what to expect from the experience awaiting them. During the holidays the staff met on the site, toured workrooms and formrooms, saw what unpacking and arrangements were necessary on the first two days of the new term and, on returning from holiday, settled down to it at once with senior pupils only to help them. Then the new pupils came in, 125 of them in three forms, to give us a total of 447 in twelve forms.

This simply enough has been the method used throughout our seven years at Beckfield. We receive our new pupils and attempt to build up confidence and break down shyness by our attitude, which we try to

## THE FIRST MOTION

make kindly, understanding and fair, and by the patient method of increasing familiarity until fears are relieved and freedom to speak, write and work is the natural order.

Understanding the schools and homes from which the children come is the first step. The junior schools serving us are all within a radius of one and a half miles. There were four; now with the opening of a neighbouring secondary modern school to relieve the pressure on us, there are three. The headmasters and staffs are known to us by visits to school functions and by exchange visits. Our teachers have spent days with them seeing the children who are to come to us and noting the methods and the books or material being used. Information is exchanged in advance and subsequently followed up by return visits to see what progress in the new school is being made. Schemes of work, arithmetic tests, reading tests, have been considered. The separate emphasis in each junior school, whether towards understanding, free or close discipline, is observed in action and the results considered. It can be said at once that the junior schools sending pupils to us, teach effectively by whatever method preferred, and as their establishment in this neighbourhood has lengthened, their influence on reading, writing, arithmetic, behaviour and general educational experience has strengthened.

Thus we prepared ourselves to receive those children adjudged by the junior school head teachers and confirmed by the eleven plus examination as being best fitted for a secondary modern education. The importance of the eleven plus examination and its repercussions were not underestimated by us.



## II

# THE ELEVEN PLUS EXAMINATION AND ITS REPERCUSSIONS

THE FINAL YEAR in the junior school with many bright, intelligent, enquiring children to teach should be one of the most rewarding experiences a teacher can have. That it can be harassing is due to the fact that schools are judged by their examination results and it calls for some courage to withstand public opinion.

Parents see in the winning of a grammar school place not so much a means of an education as a way to get a job. They are realists and seek the highest reward, the stamp if not always the substance of grammar school education. So the pressure on the headmaster and the teacher begins long before the final year, as parents are anxious and seek every means of making sure. Papers advertise coaching for the eleven plus examination, so apparently the demand is creating a supply prepared to stifle educational conscience if the returns are high enough. Some stories place the payment as being more lucrative than evening school work. The trend is nearer to the factory and the mass-produced mind and further from the development of original and individual attitude to life and work.

The schools counter this pressure in many ways. The best look upon the examination as a natural obstacle

to be surmounted and see in the developing child something more than an examination candidate. They keep their school-record cards showing the child's work and reaction to his whole educational setting. Even before the examinations are contemplated the experienced teachers know the children whose qualities of mind, character and temperament fit them for the various contending courses offered at eleven plus. In the examinations that follow, this prior experience is never overlooked and the headmaster's judgment can balance an inconclusive examination return.

Our local authority recognises that independent coaching for examinations exists, so it sets a practice I.Q. unreleased test a fortnight before the main test is taken. The conditions are those that will operate then. No coaching is given. Working the papers is practice enough. The result has been a raising of points scored over the years' tests when no practice in school was allowed. The results of the privileged or coached and those not coached have been better balanced, a truer reflection of merit.

The whole examination consists of a preliminary intelligence test and standardised tests in English and arithmetic taken six weeks later. Those who score 101 marks or more in the preliminary intelligence test will be considered for grammar school places and those below will not, unless their headmaster thinks that some child has not done himself justice and merits further consideration. Although the marks scored by the possible grammar school entrants are specially studied, all children take all of the tests. The marks scored in English and arithmetic by those no longer regarded as possible grammar school candidates are entered on their

## THE ELEVEN PLUS EXAMINATION

school record cards and are duly passed on with all other information to their secondary modern headmasters.

The dress rehearsal of the practice test can be seen to be good in that all are made familiar with the kind of test to be used. During the fortnight before the main intelligence test and the six weeks before the English and arithmetic tests the mounting anticipation and anxiety of parents and children can interfere gravely with normal school work and increase often unbearably the responsibility of teachers divided between doing what is educationally right or by examination standards successful. It is instructive to contrast what can be achieved by arithmetic drill and by English teaching at this stage. The English result is a far more reliable guide to further educability.

Before any examinations are held teachers send in to the education office their lists of children taking the examination, arranged in what from the school's experience of their work and capability is their order of merit. So far down that list the headmaster is asked to draw two lines. These divide up the list into three sections, showing at the top those about whose suitability for grammar school education the head teacher has no nagging doubt and those at the bottom who should attend a secondary modern school. The middle group defies accurate estimation and may become border-line candidates to be interviewed separately later, or may show themselves conclusively on the examination day to be linked with the secondary modern group already determined. Events sometimes upset these forecasts, but not in such degree as to cast serious doubt on the headmaster's ability to foretell accurately what the examination should reveal.



About 20 per cent of our school population are offered places in grammar schools after the border-line candidates have been interviewed by two panels of teachers each consisting of two grammar school and one secondary modern head meeting boys and girls separately. The panels set the children at ease and give them opportunities of showing their aptitude for grammar school work and life by question and discussion. Each child's headmaster is available and can be called in to the interviewing room to give the panel his estimate based on school records. The panel has examination results, the head teacher's opinion and a personal meeting with each child to help it towards its decision. So the final grammar school places are filled.

The secondary modern school is directly affected by the attitude taken by junior school headmasters. If the head's anxiety is for his reputation as a winner of grammar school places there is a likelihood and in some cases a certainty that the climate of opinion concerning secondary modern education is not favourable. This is exemplified by the mother who came to see a secondary modern school headmaster recently, and began her conversation by saying, 'My daughter is very disappointed that she has to come to this school.' The sense of failure, of frustration carried by that child to its new school is a poor foundation on which to establish confidence and application to work and a poor legacy from the previous school.

When children look forward to coming to their new school it is easier to go straight on to win their interest, affection and support for all work and social activities undertaken. When loyalty is withheld from the beginning, parents and children giving only a grudging

acceptance of membership of a school, limited advance in any direction is possible.

When children have just begun their first term at Beckfield a meeting of new parents is called and the position fairly stated in such terms as these: 'We do not accept as our motto "Abandon hope all ye who enter here"'. We cannot expect loyalty from children who are constantly being reminded that they have let down their parents by not obtaining grammar school places. There are real advantages from looking fairly at your child's capabilities and prospects and we are prepared through our work and societies to take him as far as he can go. Help us to strengthen the standing of a new school devoting all its energies and understanding to educating your children in the fullest sense in which the word can be interpreted.'

The reaction is immediate and to be expected. The majority give good support, some are oblivious and a few ask about the contrast in examinations, equipment, staffing, and tradition between grammar and secondary modern schools. When it is pointed out that the secondary modern school exists in its own right and is not intended to be a pale copy of a grammar school there is usually acquiescence and modified support, growing with experience to greater confidence in our work and our educational intention.

### III

## TRANSITION AND CONTINUITY

THE HOME INFLUENCE is very closely felt by the child throughout its years at the primary school and a single teacher responsible for more of the class's work emphasises that necessary sympathy. We recognise that, and for the first two days in this secondary modern school we suspend our time-table so that we can receive our new children appropriately and allay whatever magnified fears have been forming in their minds about our work and ways.

First we use the statistics and information provided on the Junior School Record Card to enable us to place our children in their new forms. After the first assembly in the school hall the new children remain behind to be placed and introduced to their new teachers. We take the aggregate marks scored in the eleven plus examination in the Intelligence, English and Arithmetic tests and on this basis determine the forms. As it is a mixed school there are sometimes administrative difficulties about the preponderance of boys over girls or girls over boys and a class of 40 may find itself with 24 girls to 16 boys, which raises problems in the practical rooms. We also note the classes from which they have come in the junior school and balance the marks scored in the public examination with their last teacher's estimation of their ability. The resulting posi-



## TRANSITION AND CONTINUITY

tions are as accurate as a grading examination can be expected to be.

During the two days, while first year form teachers are getting to know the children, examinations in arithmetic and English are given so that present capabilities may be assessed. Simple sums in the four rules up to fractions and decimals are set and the results tabulated. The best of the A form are shown to be just below reasonable grammar school standard, with occasional children displaying real competence and setting down their work beautifully and the slower children stumbling over the most elementary points in number and money sums. In English a piece of continuous writing is asked for, usually concerned with a holiday experience. From it the teacher becomes speedily familiar with the children's powers of expression and control over spelling, punctuation and writing. The first impression is helpful though not final. Children, like adults, often improve on acquaintance. Not only are we looking at them but they are looking at us to see if we are the kind of people that they can work and play with.

Nothing excites their interest more in the first two days than the form in which they are put and the teachers and rooms they will visit. As they come from several schools, partnerships that have existed from early primary school days may be broken up. Children from other schools are met for the first time and entrenched positions are taken up near to or far from girl or boy friends at the front or the back of the class. Conducted walks are taken round the school so that the nearest way to the Art Room or Bookcraft Room can be understood. The children meet or see other teachers

## TRANSITION AND CONTINUITY

and become familiar with their names and rooms. They will look forward to moving about the school to subject rooms for their lessons.

We make use of the chance while filling in registers and record cards of having personal interviews. The child sits or stands close by the teacher and talks about the school he has come from and his family. There is no indecent prying. Work and play characteristics, behaviour alone or in a group, home background will all grow clearer as the weeks go by but this first meeting sets the tone of much that follows. We hear about the father's and mother's work, the other children in the family, their own hobbies and interests and ambitions. Where trust is established from the beginning it is easier for the child to ask or confide and easier for the teacher to understand and help. We seek from this beginning to work together with reasonable give and take to relieve the discipline imposed by work.

School rules are kept simple and few in number. They relate to the problem of disembarking from the bus and crossing the road, to entering the school and moving about the corridors. There is no repression for its own sake and orderliness is sought for its effectiveness. As long as the children are moving about the school in reasonable order, talking quietly and showing consideration the school rules might seem not to exist at all. They are there in reserve with the value of scaffolding, less obtrusive as the building grows.

The children soon learn where their clothing can be stored and where it can be dried in wet weather. They appoint their monitors to collect their milk during morning break. They find who their companions will be at school lunch time in the canteen where older boys



## TRANSITION AND CONTINUITY

and girls sit at table with the younger ones in groups of six. Even without starting lessons there is so much of real value to be done. After all, learning to live together is a major concern and this new beginning invariably involves us in strains and stresses. It is remarkable how few really difficult situations arise. Occasionally a boy or girl feels that he cannot bear his new surroundings and involves parents, teachers, attendance officers and the Child Guidance Clinic in the problem of settling in. Once that stage is past allegiance to the school may become very close indeed and the subsequent change at fifteen years of age be less difficult.

House captains have been appointed by the senior children at their meetings before the school year begins and from them most of the school prefects are chosen. In a school of 550 children we have ten boys and ten girls serving as prefects. They vary in qualities of leadership, tact and persuasion, but all show a strong, willing sense of responsibility and do their utmost to acquire authority. It is necessary sometimes to curb their enthusiasm. Their ideas on authority are limited. They would be despots with no benevolence or ingratiation with pressure groups enjoying a passing influence in the school. With encouragement and support from members of staff the nature of authority begins to be understood. Example wins more bouts than precept. A fine lad or girl at the age of fifteen can influence a whole school for good, especially if he is an all-rounder, modest in his games or athletics prowess and good-humoured and determined in work and behaviour.

The prefects exercise general control of cloakrooms and corridors as children come in or go out of school.

On wet days they take over supervision at break from the staff who go to drink a 'grateful' cup of tea. They are active in games and societies. They total house points and make deductions for lateness fairly and conscientiously. They share with all senior children the opportunity of reading the lesson in assembly in the morning. They run the tuck shop. They meet the staff socially once each term and share tea break with them. They have their own special party with games and dancing. Their position is a proud one. They seek it, hold it and merit distinction for the way in which they learn that tolerance, self-control and purpose are part of the authority and that bawling and strutting are not acceptable. In the best of our prefects this opportunity for exercising control, for overcoming difficulties of organisation and movement is sterling training and strengthens qualities of leadership after the best patterns. For the other children of weaker control it is good experience so that they are better able to recognise responsible behaviour in others when they meet it.

Every school must have its leaders. They should be good ones, acceptable to staff and children alike. We are fortunate in that after the selection examination at eleven plus no further creaming from our secondary modern school to commercial or technical schools is undertaken. Children transfer to further education from us at fifteen. So we have house captains and prefects with something about them, personality often or else reasonable competence. If only they did not leave at the end of the term in which they are fifteen their influence might be even greater, as they become more experienced in helping the staff to run the school.

Other children have their several allegiances to

## TRANSITION AND CONTINUITY

friends, to form teachers and form-mates and to their houses. We divide our school into four houses with names derived from York's history:

Alcuin	Green
Ebor	Blue
Minster	Red
Severus	Yellow

Each child on entering the school is allocated to a house, an effort being made to strengthen the house which has been weakest the previous year. Brothers and sisters of children already in the school go to the same house. Members of staff conduct meetings to elect officials and to encourage effort in work or punctuality.

Points are awarded to children doing meritorious work, and these are totted up each fortnight. The house with the largest number of points in each form is awarded three marks, the next two, the third one, a total of six points for each form. Thus numbers are kept small and competition ranges throughout the term, one house rarely being a large number of points in front of the others. A deduction of points is made each fortnight for each late-comer who has been late twice.

A memorial cup to an old and respected teacher by old students is awarded to the leading house at the end of each term at the final assembly. It remains in the possession of that house, whose colour it wears, for a term.

Inter-house games and athletics have their part in our school, so that children with varied gifts can serve their house and so their school. This the new children learn inside and outside the schoolroom.

Respect for what has been fittingly provided by local



authorities has to be taught and a firm line taken to preserve pleasant grounds, buildings and equipment to keep them serviceable and agreeable. We found that the best way of doing this with the first children using the new buildings was to make them familiar with the work, cost and plans for the school before we were able to take over and establish our classes. This cannot be done so easily with successive waves of children. The thrill of newness, of being the first privileged to use fine new buildings, has gone. We have instead an eight years' old tradition.

The way in to our school is broad and winding and lends itself to an avenue of flowering shrubs and low bordering hedges. The lawns began to strengthen and were kept close cut and trim. Daffodil bulbs in hundreds were planted so that the first spring brought a bright yield. Tea roses filled the centre near the entrance to the school. Respect for growing flowers and shrubs was steadily won and now each season is looked forward to for the reward it brings. Herbaceous plants in the school yards have a strenuous existence as it is very difficult to avoid running over the edge of the playground on to the soil, but still they grow and make their mark. The roses and flowering trees were provided by the authority, but the bulbs, some plants and the climbing roses fast spreading along the walls below the form room windows were given by the school. It remains a continual battle to keep lawns and flower beds free from litter, but the issue is known by the school and the values being fought for are often appreciated. What are we struggling for? That the present experience of school grounds and buildings shall be a pleasant, gracious one, even though in some cases only dimly

perceived, and that the memory of school days may include the right kind of picture.

Indoors, cloakrooms and corridors can be fair game for exuberance and thoughtlessness. Eternal vigilance and a co-operative, understanding cleaning staff are helps. Staff and prefects combine at breaks and during lunch hours to check irresponsible behaviour. Young legs naturally want to run and skip and young minds cannot credit that voices can be heard unless raised to the tenth power. A seething cloakroom can always be avoided if the teacher on duty is there in good time to receive incomers and create an easy discipline that imposes its own control, so that it requires a considerable effort for a boisterous child to make himself conspicuous by breaking the reasonable hum of conversation with raucous comment. This kind of discipline is no less effective for being contrived rather than repressive. The restraint imposed is neither unnatural nor rebelled against. It becomes the accepted way of behaviour and is a great lesson learnt. The pity is that the example set by members of staff may be offset by the first badly behaved youths or adults met with after school hours.

We watch the freshness, the noise and bustle of excited groups of children recently transferred to us from the junior schools and we turn from them to the self-conscious sullenness of the difficult adolescent or more thankfully to the many more numerous normal children who at fifteen are preparing to leave us for their first jobs. We do not write up our schemes governing or helping this growing process as we do for school subjects, but we know the nature of our responsibility in forwarding healthy development of mind and body at every stage. If we succeed in creating the right atmosphere



for work and shed the traditional schoolmasterly smugness for a nicely poised personal give-and-take we have achieved one of our most important aims. This is an element of transition often overlooked. Settling in and reaching out to formative experiences involves the whole child, not just the mental processes needed for doing sums or writing compositions. Recognition of the many-sidedness of the child's experience teaches us that there is more than one way to win his interest.

Respect for grounds, respect for buildings, respect for books and equipment. So the lessons learnt and forgotten in the primary school are learnt again and often forgotten again. We look at the first scripts written and commend or deplore them. We set ourselves a standard of neatness that becomes increasingly possible as digital control grows stronger, with possibility of increasing carelessness if the attitude is wrong. We do not make it the main object of the work but we do expect a standard of craftsmanship in writing and figuring that will aid communication. And that leads us from slovenly or good writing to slovenly or bad speech.

Indistinct speech plagues all teachers. We know that lack of intelligence may be the cause but so may physical or emotional disorders. As with faulty vision or any of the recognisable physical deficiencies we have medical support readily available at the School Clinic. But to release the pent-up writer or speaker who hardly knows how to begin is like striking water from the rock. That writing and speaking come eventually is always a tribute to the patience, kindness and imagination of some teacher. The freedoms practised in the primary schools prepare the way for those that the secondary schools find most helpful in making children lose their

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self-consciousness and enter fully into group work or play without embarrassment or resistance.

Our children are encouraged to buy school uniforms. About one-third do so willingly, pleased at once to identify themselves with their new school. Many others would like to have them but cannot afford them, while not being at such a poverty level that they might claim assistance from the local authority. We cannot compel our children to wear school uniform. We remind them frequently that we prefer it to the jackets and dresses in which they come to school, tidy though these are. We know that loyalty to school does not depend on having a school uniform, but we would like to have both.

What else helps to make a child a member of a new community? We have listed some and attempted to show how we prepare the entry to school life so that much can be assimilated naturally, so that the feel of belonging to a new school is soon a reality. But there are influences outside the proper sphere of teacher control devised by the children themselves. As soon as it is known where the child is to come after the summer holidays the introduction begins. Children talk about their friends, their teachers and their lessons and games and pitch their tale a little higher than mere accuracy would demand. Anticipation of new experience play pleasurably or anxiously on the hopes or fears of the new boy or girl. How much the new school means meeting with other new pupils rather than new staff is a disconcerting jar to our self-importance. Certainly initiation by children of children is one of the ceremonies meaning most as the new term begins. The threat rather than the performance seems to be the



## TRANSITION AND CONTINUITY

thing. Nothing much happens. A little rough and tumble, a judicious application of holly leaves to unprotected parts and the ordeal is over, the acceptance complete for the normal children. Occasionally a nervous child is upset but rarely is any serious anxiety caused.

If it were it would probably have been anticipated in the medical report that accompanies the record card handed on from the primary school. The school doctor is supposed to indicate, as the result of regular medical inspection, any weaknesses that should be guarded against. With his help the child with short sight sits at the front of each class and has repeated visits for tests and repairs to glasses. The deaf child has his hearing aid and the child with an impediment has regular weekly visits to the speech therapist. So too has the emotionally disturbed or difficult child to the Child Guidance Clinic, where parents too are interviewed, the child's background and heredity noted, conclusions drawn and advice given.

Apart from the last school's medical report, the previous teacher's own comments can be very revealing. 'A whole class in himself' indicates feelingly how much attention some child will expect to have from us. 'Prefers the company of adults' prepares us for a solitary boy who will shrink from games with members of his form but will hang around after school hoping that his form teacher will find him a job, and will come back in the holidays to accompany a visiting gardener if he is given any encouragement. The list of case histories in miniature becomes more impressive during the years until, looking back over work and experiences, we sometimes consider these thoughtful observations of

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## TRANSITION AND CONTINUITY

previous teachers more important than marks and places.

These helpful remarks are generally the result of patient, sympathetic observations such as a teacher strengthened in his work by religious belief might give. They derive as often as not from observations made outside the classroom and certainly not only from the close confines of class lessons. It would obviously be well then to meet the primary school teacher before his children come on to us. Where youngsters are eager and curious for work and play the problems to be met are minor ones, but with the slower or temperamental children there is a wealth of experience going far beyond teaching techniques to be passed on. It is to the advantage of every authority to allow teacher exchanges between types of schools so that, in more than imagination, teachers can leap over their own school wall and look into the other schools that support them.

We have followed this practice in the summer term before children come to us. Teachers, especially of the backward children, have spent a day or more with the classes that will come to them, gathering hints from the teachers, seeing samples of work done and watching children work. Introductions are made, interest aroused. We discover which class readers are preferred for backward children and note that another contributing school has a different opinion. We see an arithmetic test being set to a top class and we set it to our own third year B stream, three years older, and find that the average result is the same. Silent reading and word recognition tests can be compared and results studied. The choice of a Book 4 Arithmetic can be discussed beside the knowledge that some of the children coming

to the secondary modern school will begin again at Book 1. The six arithmetic periods and the eighteen plus English periods taken by the single class teacher will emphasise both a need and an opportunity. The reason for a staggered assembly, numbers, age and range of understanding, will drive home a point. A day spent in anyone else's school can be stimulating. It is worth doing if for no other purpose than binding teachers together in mutual respect and often admiration for the way in which they do their work. It continues to present the challenge of educational opportunity and thought as *one* challenge and not of splinter groups or courses. It sets going all kinds of worth while enquiries, such as tracing through written English development in some test cases.

Aims of staff and headmasters become clearer. Educationists can soon sense the purpose or evaluate the atmosphere of any school they visit. Where the experience is good it can be followed, where bad avoided and where controversial it can be discussed. Free writing in infant and junior schools sets problems for the secondary modern school to report on. Does the end justify the means or is it any worse than formal, stereotyped teaching would achieve? Children must know their tables. How do you teach them? How do you divide your arithmetic period? Into short, sharp, questions based on table drill, into spoken or written mental tests, into mechanical exercises and tests, into puzzle or problem stretching exercises and in what proportion? How do you keep your sections working when you have forty children in your class? When well-meaning teachers can visit each other's school to ask such questions the children will benefit.

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Tests might reveal that there is little to choose in effectiveness between good 'free' and good 'formal' teaching, but to see each in progress and mark the effect in the demeanour and behaviour of the children is most rewarding and may help towards a reasoned acceptance of the best of each method. Educational visits for children are highly rated in our post-war progress. Educational visits to each other's schools is as essential for teachers who needs must praise the highest when they see it.

Parent Teacher Associations present another side of continuity and preparation for it. It is sensible to invite heads of allied schools to speak about the stage that lies ahead. Usually this can be done in an honest, forthright way before parents who are anxious for their children's advancement but not blind to their deficiencies either. Before such an audience, provided the school's reputation for hard work and friendliness is beyond dispute, it is possible to speak of examinations and education in such a way that they are no longer regarded as synonymous terms. So the problems of transfer from one school to another at eleven plus can be bridged and the parent reassured that all that is educationally possible will be done for his child. That trust created, the climate in which work can flourish has less likelihood of being blighted by the cold fronts of doubt and disillusionment because the problem is at last being boldly faced.

The value of this meeting between the head of the secondary modern school and parents of junior school children who may come to him cannot be over-stated. Their belief in the grammar school road to the professions is founded on fifty years of sterling achievement by teachers and pupils in those schools. The secondary



modern school is a new venture in a disturbed age. Is it to do the same work as the grammar school? If not, how is it to win public esteem? We are anxious for our children's future and have no mind to be fobbed off with any form of education labelled second best, say the parents.

To their credit the heads of junior schools sending children to us have been doing their best to educate the parents to a realisation that forms of teaching and subjects taught cannot be the same for all. They have had the courage to inform parents that their children cannot move at the accepted grammar school pace and have stated that the next objective, though limited, may be truer and better for children of lower academic standard. Parents do not easily accept this. The prizes just out of reach should somehow be theirs, they argue. But if they respect the integrity of the headmaster making the statement they are usually more co-operative and understanding when their child enters the secondary modern stage and have no sense of failure. They are at last aware that their child has done the best that he could. We can begin there.

There are still heads of junior schools who base their reputation on the number of pupils who go from them to the grammar school. As the average over the whole country is about 20 per cent they can hardly be considered to be doing their jobs well if their reputations are so narrowly based. They should be equally proud to have passed on no non-readers, or children with more than a smattering of arithmetic than two-figure sums in addition and subtraction in number and money represents. The damage is well and truly done if only those who leave them for the grammar schools have



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anything to commend them. This goes deeper than loyalty to colleagues. It is educationally dishonest and unsound not to be interested in the well-being of every child in the school, however poor scholastically or unrewarding socially he may be. The junior headmaster's attitude, spoken or unspoken, is felt and understood by the majority of children, so it behoves him not to bequeath a sense of failure as his legacy to the secondary modern school. Our responsibility is heavy enough without having to face a bad start to our truncated four-year course.

## IV

### PLANS AND TIME TABLES

'ALL CHILDREN NEED to keep them happy and contented is something new to look forward to each day,' said a parent ruefully watching the train pull away with a group of children so eagerly looking forward to a school exchange visit that they neglected the last lingering look behind that comforts parents for the sacrifices they have made. Almost as eagerly we drew out of our old school, and swarmed up to our new buildings laid out attractively in seventeen acres of land. The City Architect took a last look at the building that represented the authority's first essay in post-war planning, gave an apprehensive glance at the children waiting to possess it, and we moved in.

'Smashing' was the inevitable comment as the children sat at their single-locker desks in their new classrooms to which they had come from the boys' and girls' cloakrooms. The cloakrooms had presented the first important comparison with the old school. For two washbasins on each staircase there were twenty here. The lavatories were no longer 'across the yard'. Coats could be hung comfortably and drying and storage accommodation was provided. The situation was convenient and led easily to the two wings of six classrooms each fronting the drive. In each there were five rooms of 480 square feet and one of 760 square feet. The

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smaller rooms would eventually be used by classes of 30, but the reality of our numbers meant that 40's must use them. The two larger rooms were allocated to history and geography as providing added space for table work, visual aids and displays.

There was a storeroom at the end of each classroom corridor. One was immediately reserved for general stock and English books, and the other, as we had no gymnasium, for sports equipment. We were soon to feel that however adequate storage space was claimed to be in building regulations, it was never adequate enough to serve our purpose, especially for classrooms. There is not enough room to assemble large displays in the present-sized classroom holding 40 children, nor is it possible to leave work in different stages of completion. This difficulty has been met more satisfactorily in schools built more recently by setting storerooms between classrooms.

The practical rooms were well supplied with storage space and general equipment was of the highest level possible so soon after the war. The housecraft rooms were arranged in self-contained units of gas or electric stoves, sink, bench and table and cooking utensils were of good quality and number. The larder was stocked by regular order. Washing, drying, and ironing facilities were provided. There was a refrigerator and an open fire in one room. In both there was space enough for setting a luncheon table and serving cooked meals. Tables and stools were available to accommodate classes of twenty.

The two housecraft rooms had as adjoining rooms on the same wing, needlework and craft rooms. The needlework store was small, but the room itself of good



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size. Tables were set along by the windows for electric, treadle and hand sewing machines. Cutting-out tables were not ideal. The girls' craftroom so far has been used mainly for weaving. Single and double looms, and a four-way loom existed. A long bench ran down one side of the room. Water and gas were there. The storeroom was a sensible size.

The Art room admitted north light on one long side and south light on the other. A long bench ran right along under the northern windows with sink and storage space below. Wall display boards were limited by the excellent amount of window space. The storeroom at the back was sizable. The desks were adjustable.

There was a pleasant open space with flowers between the Art room and the library. The library had fixed shelves at one end and low movable shelves down one side of the room. Four movable seven foot six inch oak bookshelves were arranged slanting in parallel formation down part of one side of the room, leaving almost threequarters of the floor space for five round and five oblong tables and forty chairs. Display boards were adequate. There was a radio point conveniently placed for plugging in a loud speaker for B.B.C. programmes. The magazine shelves and librarian's table and filing cabinets stood in one corner. The room had full light on the southern side and half on the northern. Supervision of activities between the parallel shelves was quite possible from the librarian's table.

Between the library and the bookcraft or boys' craft room was a shared storeroom. Books for repair were placed there as well as current work being done in the craft room. The room had no special features at first. It was then called a large classroom. Two large tables

## PLANS AND TIME-TABLES

for pasting and cutting were acquired in time, as was also a printing machine dated 1847. Tools were gradually built up, and as no gas or water was available an electric heater for tooling books was bought and glueing was made a more convenient operation, though marbling had to be taken to the Art room. More recently a bench with water and gas fitments has helped considerably.

Next door, the science laboratory was fitted for general science. Benches round the window sides of the room had gas and electric points and sinks. The demonstration bench was raised above the level of the tables and stools. A good-sized storeroom housed much carefully acquired and privately made apparatus. The far wall between cupboards was painted white for pictures thrown the length of the room by an episcopes made for about one pound. A small screen, of Indian rope trick character, existed for the more expensive but more limited episcopes. A school garden was established to support the science teaching.

Metalwork and woodwork rooms had good storage space. Light and pleasant to work in, with colours as attractive as those found anywhere else in the school, these craft rooms commanded an excellent view of the playing fields and the distant Hambleton hills. Down draught from the forge made the metalwork room stifling at first, but that difficulty was eventually rectified. The lathe, grinder, polisher and power saw made a ready appeal to our boys who have relished using them. Adequacy of light on the benches from the lamps provided was questioned, tested and approved. Benches and tools stood up to early tests and have been well used.

The woodwork room benches had post-war clamps

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of no great merit, but that was the only real weakness. The lathe was the only power-driven machine in the room. Tools have stood up to requirements very well.

The stage green rooms, the medical rooms and administrative block, the men's and women's staffrooms and the radio room were all centrally placed. Our only keen disappointments were the lack of a gymnasium and a housecraft flat. When the school was being planned rationing under the Ministry's operational scheme was in force. A misfortune of priority is only being remedied now, eight years later.

### PLAN OF THE SCHOOL

We took the first strain of fourth-year teaching in an old building with many disadvantages, of which one was that some of our senior pupils' practical work was undertaken at some distance from us by teachers who were not really part of our teaching staff. We have the fullest sympathy with schools still struggling in such conditions. Fortunately our local authority had its development plans well advanced and had the will and imagination to carry them through.

The new time-table for a mixed school of over 400 children, with practical rooms on the premises, set a problem much pleasanter to solve. There were twelve forms in their appropriate form rooms, two of which were marked History and Geography, and there were the empty practical rooms waiting to be used. No longer, we felt, would we be irked by the form room which changed rapidly from lesson to lesson from Art to Science to Geography and back to form room with the preparations for and impedimenta of each, making



the beginning and ending of each lesson a triumph or failure of organisation. Now it should be possible to have our materials handy from one day to the next and organisation should be simpler.

At first, as a three-stream school, it was. All the children could get into the practical rooms as half forms except in science, where the garden took the overflow. Then the building estates began to grow and a preliminary bulge pushed our numbers up to nearly 600 children in sixteen forms. Practical rooms became dual-purpose and were needed as form rooms too. Without a gymnasium, the hall took assembly, physical education, music and drama classes in steady succession. The school was full to overflowing, with never a dull minute though many a strained one.

Our time-tables are built up on the following understanding. Form teachers take their own written English, Maths., and Scripture lessons before taking their special subjects. Thus our senior mistress would take form 4A for nearly one-third of the week in the basic subjects before working the remainder of the time at history with A and B forms throughout the school. Specialist teachers in Housecraft, Needlework, Science, Music, Metalwork and Woodwork would do specialist work and almost no other. The rest of the staff would know their forms through teaching them before they taught anyone else in the school. Thus the form teacher would add experience of their ways to his responsibility for his form, and this in secondary modern and possibly in junior grammar school forms seems fundamental. The children need support from someone who sees them more than half a day a week. Be their problem of health, work or character they become more confident and

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willing to co-operate where they know they are understood. The teacher stands for parent, doctor, and father-confessor at times and has done his work well if he can meet the children's trust in him and inspire or, more realistically, build up a belief that work is possible and can be good. The weaker the child the more he needs to lean upon someone kind and trusted. Many a teacher finds himself forced into a position he had never contemplated holding, and, in holding it, he comes to recognise the needs and accepts his new status of social worker.

A typical 4th-year time-table would thus offer nine English, five Maths., three Scripture, one Library, two History, Geography, Physical Education, Games, Music, Art, Crafts, and Needlework, six Housecraft, four Woodwork, and four Metalwork periods, forty in all. Periods would vary in length from 40 to 30 minutes, diminishing from the beginning of the morning and afternoon so that the shorter periods are taken when the children and teachers are understandably tiring. They might be arranged thus:



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The form teacher would be empowered to make any change necessary from day to day in the order of his own English, Maths., or Scripture periods, provided he maintained the over-all balance of periods over any week.

A specialist teacher's time-table might read:



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It is to be noted that first-year children have been excluded from this time-table because the school has more children than it can reasonably accommodate in full-lesson periods. The decision to be taken was whether to have shorter handicraft lessons, say of two instead of four periods, so that all the school could be taught from the first year, or to allow longer than two periods in all forms from the second year, when manual strength was greater and basic work in form subjects could have had additional time spent on it. We chose four period lessons from the second year onwards. We would prefer to have our children taking Woodwork and Metalwork from the first year, but must wait until the bulge passes.

A general form teacher's time-table would show the time given to his own form subjects with English, Maths., and Scripture and also to his specialist work in the school.

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Nearly every teacher offers some specialist work. If he does not he has some variety of teaching, possibly English prose, verse or drama to other forms, while his own is being taken *in a specialist taught subject*.

I have described a splendid new building and its fine amenities. It might with reason be asked whether we have the staff competent to give the children an education comparable with the environment.

My own experience has been a happy one and I hope it might be shared by all headmasters. There has been in the old building, and now in the new school, an experienced group of older teachers setting themselves the highest possible standards of work and community living. They were not graduates. Had they been they could not have done better work. They have made themselves efficient by interest in their subject and by application to it.

Their example has been important not only to all pupils who have come under their influence but also to young teachers groping for standards, needing advice on teaching methods, discipline or personal relationships with the children we teach. They have never withheld advice when it was called for, not even if it were uncomfortable hearing for the enquirer. Working alongside such teachers has been difficult at first for newcomers, as the pace has been exacting and the effort prolonged, but the result has been a tribute to good sense and accommodation all round.

The staff has been encouraged to think new thoughts about education. The result has been that new ideas are debated weekly between members of staff and myself. If the suggestion from either side is good it goes into the syllabus and is tried. The approach is kept

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fresh without weakening traditional teaching methods.

It remains vital that the relationship between the staff and the headmaster must be right if the school is to thrive. Mistakes and successes can be seen for what they are—honest attempts to find the best way of solving the problem of teaching slow, difficult, unwilling or clever children. The younger teachers reach out, and have confidence in themselves and in two or three years after leaving the training college become really useful members of staff.

Staffing new secondary modern schools can no doubt be the administrator's dream and the headmaster's nightmare. My tribute is that whatever of good is to be found in this book comes from the work of a staff interested in the subjects they teach, the children they meet and the community life they help to create.

Statistics can be clear enough to the author of them, but they are all too often meaningless or unattractive to the person unfamiliar with the subject. It can with justification be claimed that many people are totally unfamiliar with education either because they left school twenty years ago and times have changed or because the picture presented at tea-time or over homework by their children may be a little distorted in the reproduction. So it may help to follow a child through his day and see a time-table come to life.

A first-year boy might arrive at school ten minutes early and spend his time in the play yard with his friends before being called in to his form room where his register is marked. He would then go into the School Hall to Assembly, share in the morning service of hymns, prayers and reading and hear notices of general school interest and value.



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From the school hall he would go to his first lesson. It might be geography. The first part of his lesson might comprise a review of the Natural Regions of the World with an indication on a blank map of the position of the equator, tropics and the Arctic and Antarctic circles. The second half of the lesson might be on temperature and rainfall charts for York, linking local conditions with the worldwide areas previously studied.

Following this the class would separate, the boys going to physical education in the hall and girls to an English lesson. The boys would be doing exercises singly and in twos and groups, using apparatus for agility work and the whole floor area for relay race variations. Remedial help would be given where it was possible with a word or helping hand, and encouragement to try something more ambitious or of greater skill or precision would also be part of each lesson. Meanwhile the girls would be reading from their form room library, having lecturettes, writing current stories or descriptions or doing corrections.

Break in the middle of the morning offers an opportunity for noisier talk and more violent movement in the play yard after milk has been taken. Fifteen minutes goes quickly but serves to refresh young minds more rapidly than older ones.

A music lesson may come next with the repetition of old songs, the beginning of new, some sight reading and appreciation of a gramophone recording, or a passage played on the piano. It sounds bald stated like that, but the combination of singing, note study and appreciation of orchestral or solo instrument works can make a very effective lesson.

The morning might end with English or maths. If

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it were Maths., the boy might very well be having a lesson on subtraction of decimals with examples worked on the blackboard for those whose understanding is shaky and then a group of sums of increasing complexity to three or four places for written practice.

He would have his lunch at home or in the school canteen and after a break of an hour and a half he would make his way to the history room. There with a map of the world or of the Middle East his teacher might extend his study of the Phoenicians at home to their journeys round Africa and through the Bay of Biscay to Cornwall. The lesson would be mainly narrative with map illustrations and questions to enliven it.

From there he would go with his form to the library where he might be asked to find on the shelves books of adventure with family, school, sea, air and scientific interest. He would note both titles and authors and discuss other similar books in his own home collection or found in the Public Library. Class recommendation and time for reading would close the lesson, which, like the others, would only really be a beginning, a link and incentive to further reading and study.

The day might end with a double period science or handwork lesson. In science he might be learning about the bunsen burner, first round the demonstration desk and later, with a companion, experimenting at his own bench. His handwork would be a bookcraft lesson, where he might be using a knife, a straight edge, a bone folder, a piece of cardboard, a cover paper and a glue pot. Or he might find his day ending with an English composition period where he and his companions, themselves wrecked on an island in the southern seas, find another wreck and explore it. This would be a

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continuation of the form's adventures on 1A Island in which it would not be unusual to have six or eight pages of continuous narrative written at school and home each week, with particularly well described or exciting episodes shared with the rest of the class.



## V

# THE CURRICULUM

NOTHING CAN BE more misleading than the subjects of the curriculum set out prospectus fashion. They must be qualified and modified by the number of children concerned, the equipment provided, the time available, the experience, interest and patience of the staff and the area in which the school is situated. Bearing that in mind we list the subjects taught in the school as follows: Religious Knowledge, English, Maths., History and Geography; Housecraft, Woodwork, Metalwork and Practical Drawing; Science and Gardening; Art, Bookbinding, Weaving, Needlework and allied crafts including Fabric Printing, Modelling and Printing; Music; Physical Education and Games.

We are a mixed school. Boys and girls divide for practical subjects and science and would certainly be taught in half classes for Art if staffing permitted it. The pressure of numbers has forced certain decisions upon us. For instance, we can only teach all of the boys woodwork and metalwork with reasonable time allowance if we exclude our first year from the workshops. The choice is between short periods in the first and second years that are wasteful of time in getting out and putting away tools, leaving too little practice for efficient work, and a longer period in the second year when precept has time and practice elbow room. We

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have chosen the second method in drawing up our time-table. The effective training period in school is thus two years and one term. We could of course limit the teaching to either woodwork or metalwork. We prefer to give the fuller experience, allowing options as numbers decrease in the fourth year.

Numbers and sex determine the nature of the curriculum and so does the time available. We teach eight periods a day for five days a week. Periods range from forty minutes at the beginning of the morning and afternoon and diminish to thirty minutes at the end as endurance flags. The time allotted to each subject in the third year would be something like this. Woodwork, metal and housecraft would have four periods each, a whole morning or afternoon. The girls would have two periods of needlework and two of English to balance the time spent by the boys. There are three periods of religious knowledge, and two each of handwork, history, geography, music, Art, physical education and games. The remaining time, about one-third of the week, is spent on English and maths., in the proportion of roughly two to one. Broadcast lessons and library lessons are included in the time given to subjects. It will be readily understood how reluctant teachers sometimes are to spare one of their two periods a week, say in geography, to listen to a broadcast, however good.

Too much equipment can be as much of an embarrassment as too little. It may be an unwise generalisation, but it often appears that equipment that has been acquired as the need arose is put to better use than that showered upon us. That statement does not apply to the heavier practical rooms where cookers and refrigerators, lathes and power-driven borers and grinders are

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needed from the start. We have had great satisfaction in building up our own visual aids and the slides that illustrate our work. We have worked for and bought a printing press and a tape recorder. We have accumulated looms for weaving, models in class subjects, and many art and craft aids out of the demands of our work. We would have welcomed a capital grant for the library from its opening, but we did not have it and we have worked long and hard, with consequent appreciation of every forward step taken, to meet the needs of young readers.

Equipment then can be a blessing. That it is not so always is to be regretted, for that provided in the new schools makes work so much more pleasant. It need not limit or determine the curriculum. As the local salesman puts it in demonstrating the virtues of the new washer, 'Remember, madam, you are the master of the machine.' We can use it or not use it. Our decision will be based on our knowledge of the class and the nature of our lesson and not on the desirability of being in the fashion. There is no merit of itself in using visual aids, radio or tape recorders. But it is helpful to have them by when we need them.

The thought, experience and enthusiasm that teachers bring to the subjects of the curriculum can only be appreciated by those who work with them. Subjects that have been taught at a reasonably competent level suddenly become immensely popular with the school. Subjects that have always been taught with great energy retain their interest and compulsion as new and lively directions are planned. There is a wealth of experiment possible in art and craft subjects. We consolidate the old lines of teaching and add many new ones as



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teachers come with varying degrees of experience. Thus we have found the benefit in weaving, bookbinding, modelling and various kinds of printing. The teacher widens and deepens his own grasp of the subject and carries the children along with him, encouraging them to have experiences of their own.

Experiment in dramatic form, for example, in religious knowledge, is another way of improving the teaching of a subject. Continual change is apparent in physical education lessons as new ideas are tried out. Library lessons are a fresh experience. We have to learn how to make them most useful. All subjects that are alive in their appeal make heavy demands on the resource of the teacher. The curriculum expands as he experiments and contracts as he remains passive, although the names of the subject taken remain the same. 'He teaches so much more than his subject,' said a college lecturer once after visiting a class teacher.

We use our district to the full. We have a splendid heritage of local government, buildings and records and our history scheme is charged with them. Our visits include the religious and artistic life of our city. We are not vocational in intention when we make geographical and handicraft period visits to works and factories. We have many friends in education, industry and business who are willing for the best of reasons to link their experience with ours. So the curriculum grows.

We make our schemes of work fit the child and not the subject. We try to make ourselves by study and practice as proficient as may be. We attend courses, we discuss our problems with other teachers. Here head-master and staff work together. A history scheme that took in our social studies, our Castle Museum oppor-

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tunities, our own approach to the subject was worked out by three of us one summer holiday. The teacher in charge of the subject brought her suggestions and we went through them in detail. Modifications made then were repeated in practice. The scheme was over-wieldy here or had not enough body there. We eased it or strengthened it to suit our classes. We planned time charts and illustrations. We considered what the folders should include at the end of the course. We made reasonable provision in the time-table for project work. The slower forms were reckoned with.

The development of our geography scheme shows this willingness to change as our own experience tested our course. We started with various journeys round the world from Britain for our 'B' stream. In their second year they studied the British Isles and Europe, attending to geographical features, produce and people, and in the third year took in the British Empire in a similar way. The 'A' groups were meanwhile studying the three southern continents in their first year, North America and Asia in the second and the British Isles and Europe in their third. The method was by text-book and blackboard illustration.

A revision of the scheme produced this result:

First year: The natural regions of the world. Emphasis will be on the life of the people in the various regions, the natural surroundings, produce and animal life.

Second year: The British Isles. The life and work of the people, showing how Britain helps herself and the world also. Headings included farming, coal, iron and steel, fishing ports, shipping, transport, wool, cotton, linen, minerals, tanning and holiday resorts.

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Third year: World commodities and trades stressing the interdependence of nations. Introduction to populations continued in the Fourth year and Colonisation added, with special study of the British Empire.

Later we criticised this scheme as giving no scope for regional study of the world. We thought also that we ought to give our 'A' and 'B' forms more practical teaching. We were by this time a four-stream school. We still found value in the previous scheme for 'C' and 'D' stream children and retained it for them.

Three years later we had devised our present syllabus. Both sections show radical changes of emphasis. For the 'A' and 'B' forms experience has taught us to cut down some of the time allowed for a study of commodities so that a close regional survey might be possible. We lay more stress on physical geography and mapwork and we keep in touch with current news, leaving our scheme on one side if we feel that an understanding of the background of some pressing world problem will be justified. The 'C' and 'D' forms follow a topic approach working outward from the child's immediate experience to world geography. Formal geography is tempered by map work and local studies designed to encourage the children in leisure pursuits and to place them in their full environment.

The point of the foregoing lines is that we review constantly the content of our syllabuses and the methods we employ. We have problems of co-ordination that exercise us mightily. Where there are two or perhaps three teachers responsible for organising the subject the solution is simple enough given good will and co-operation. We have no specialists in religious knowledge,



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English and arithmetic and the responsibility for linking the work is my own.

We have an agreed syllabus as our general guide in taking religious knowledge. Each form teacher has three periods a week with his form studying the Old and New Testament stories and teaching and following the lives of Christian workers and heroes. The fourth year consider the development of the Christian churches to the present day with the current problems facing them. They also discuss comparative religion.

We seek to apply our religious teaching throughout the day, believing that the example set is better than the lesson given. Morning assembly is taken each day. In many school subjects religious teaching is incidental but important. The library is building up a stock of reference books and stories about Christian teaching and people. Local clergy are good friends of the school and attend all functions. They come in to read lessons and prayers during United Nations Week and they have introduced speakers from foreign missions. Each year the school holds a Remembrance Day service and a Carol service with lessons. Christmas gifts are made to hospitals, children's homes and nurseries. Parents are drawn in to these occasions whenever possible.

The agreed syllabus, personal conscience and Christian example are the co-ordinating factors here. I can think of no stronger.

Realism is as stern a daughter of the voice of God as duty. Applied to arithmetic and English it can be very disconcerting. We bring ourselves face to face with our task by setting a four-rules test up to and including fractions to our first-year children during their first two days in the school. From the statistics gathered we can

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expect that the 'A' form children might score 60-70 per cent, the 'B' stream 30-40 per cent, the 'C' stream 25-30 per cent, and the 'D' stream 10-15 per cent. This means that our 'D' streams reach us with some little familiarity with numbers, the 'C' stream up to money, and the 'B' stream up to length, weight and capacity. In any stream, including the 'A', children will be found capable of making elementary mistakes in basic calculations.

Our first need is, therefore, to see the children as they really are. All first-year children will spend part of their first term establishing neat habits, working revision exercises, recognising arithmetical terms and agreeing on methods of working simple processes. Each week's work will consist of mental exercises, memorisation, mechanical exercises and suitably graded problems. The physical realities of measurement, weight and capacity are not neglected. Group and individual work is arranged to suit occasions. Practical work with mathematical instruments supplements the drawing done in woodwork and metalwork. Gardening plans and scale drawings have real application and so has local survey.

We expect that 'A' form children staying more than one term in their fourth year may have some understanding of algebra, elementary trigonometry, the use of logarithm tables and surveying. It is more difficult to predict the standard likely to be reached by 'C' and 'D' children. Their work will relate to practical experience with the home, work, hobbies and travel constantly in mind.

A major problem in specialisation always faces us in our English teaching. The class teacher normally takes his own written work. Literature is shared out amongst

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a number of teachers whose interest in the novel and prose, drama and poetry fits them for the work. We serve them with good class libraries, specially chosen novels and our school library. We have a drama festival each year in which each form presents a play. It is a heavy responsibility to be preparing more than two or three forms for this at one time, so several teachers share the teaching of drama and combine most effectively in the production of an annual play for an audience of parents. Poetry is a separate, difficult and heavy charge. It is taken by those who love the task. Otherwise it had better not be undertaken.

We seek fluency and understanding in our reading. By group and individual instruction in class, by play reading, poetry reading, reading compositions, reading in assembly, reading reports of school societies, we encourage practice in real conditions before a friendly audience. Confidence as much as technique is needed and both are sought.

Telling stories, acting in plays, speaking poems, giving lecturettes, taking part in discussions, explaining work at desk or bench, giving directions, are some of the ways we employ of helping children to say what they mean economically and clearly. They hear good speech from their teachers, gramophone records and the radio. They sing frequently. They learn to listen and consider how good speech makes or mars.

We recognise that writing is a discipline. We say that children can only learn more about writing by writing. We seek subjects that appeal to each age. We try to strengthen and confirm their power of arrangement and exposition as well as their narrative style. They write about school and home experiences. They use the



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library to do simple research for the hobby or interest book that they are compiling. They have a willing audience to whom to direct their writing and always the patient support of their teacher. The subject is too wide to catch in a paragraph.

We do not judge children's punctuation only by adult standards. We take active means of teaching spelling. Grammar is functional and not isolated unrealistically from composition lessons. We believe in corrections done for the pupil's benefit as an encouragement to further effort and not as a condemnation.

The library supports and influences much of our English teaching. Each form has a separate period in which it learns first to handle books and then to use them to advantage. There is directed reading and foraging as well as browsing. The library, like the subjects in our curriculum, is in a healthy state of ebbing and flowing, meeting new needs and rekindling old ones, always renewing itself in different ways. We can meet most of the many demands made on us from all subjects in the school. Information concerning the library is kept before children and staff so that all know what to look for.

To control the general direction of the English teaching while leaving freedom for each teacher to introduce what he has found effective and pleasurable is my job. From time to time I send round a circular offering helpful comment, but most frequently it is by personal discussion with class teachers that ideas can be worked out. As with our arithmetic teaching we pass on the fullest possible information from form to form. Exercise books, reports and standards are talked over between teaching, passing on and taking over new groups of

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children, in ways calculated to serve the needs of the children with the greatest efficiency and imagination.

Specialist teaching is available in housecraft and handicraft subjects. Both sets of teachers believe in the same sound principle of basic training of skills in the first year and a half to two years and then encouragement of individual effort. The assignment cards in housecraft offer pupils the chance of organising and practising several skills learnt separately during basic training. The models made by the boys illustrate the value of the skills previously acquired. The resource and initiative shown by boys and girls in these subjects springs from the firm foundation of known method and practice. The average children can repeat with variable success what they have learnt, the best can build on it.

Our curriculum has as its inspiration preparation for life as a wider than vocational aim. Our science courses illustrate the fact. Topics chosen for their intrinsic interest and probable future usefulness help the children to develop their powers of observation and to weigh and verify evidence before making a final decision. The narrow outline of the course includes the simple physics and chemistry of air and water, properties of matter, electricity, biology, human physiology, common appliances of home and workshop and gardening. The teaching has the aims of the course well in mind, using home-made apparatus wherever possible, leading from the known and familiar to new findings at every stage, consolidating before moving on and modifying treatment for slower children.

The science syllabus over-spills into a Natural History Society where keen youngsters use the microscope to examine home-made slides and exchange experiences



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in watching life in field, pond and hedgerow. Music and Art and several other subjects can not be confined to the time-table either. Their influence spreads throughout the school in time and shape and colour so that all, whether participating or not, become conscious of what is going on in choir or club. This is the right result for a curriculum. The boundaries of subjects shade off into reality as naturally as the leaves grow on the tree.

Boys and girls growing up together in school through adolescence are helped towards a sane respect for their bodies through physical exercises and games. Prudery does not exist. Each appreciates the other's prowess in exercises, athletics and games and they come together often for their first dancing lessons before Christmas parties. The provision of excellent gymnasia and playing fields for new schools is the material and physical counterpart of the moral training that goes on through example and frankness as occasion calls for it. Sex teaching has no part in our curriculum and yet it is going on all the time. A prison commissioner calls for 'heroes' to set up before our young people. The healthy influence of many teachers may not qualify them for public notice or reward, but the standards they set and maintain in their work and play is second in importance only to that exercised by home and church.

This chapter seeks to show that the subjects in our curriculum are as limitless as our attitude to life. We are not restricted, happily as yet, by external examinations. Our syllabuses can range and change to suit the children we teach. They can be firmly based yet enquiring. They serve body and mind. They take advantage of local opportunities. They gain immeasurably in power from staff enthusiasm and pupil willingness.



## VI

# TEACHING METHODS

A PERTINENT CRITICISM of secondary modern schools is that they do not stretch their ablest pupils. The critics mean invariably that they do not take examinations at G.C.E. ordinary standard or at some conveniently arranged standard that would hardly win prestige but would presumably prove that teachers and schools can only be expected to work if utterly meaningless examinations are devised for them. Such critics do injustice to teachers working from higher motives than that.

Like other secondary modern schools we take in children of a very wide range of ability. The best are of moderate 'C' form grammar school standard—not good academic material at all. That does not imply that they are incapable of benefitting from teaching that is near-academic in some respects, but we find that other methods are more successful. The main weakness is in understanding and using their own language. They need support and explanation at almost every stage. Their mental digestion is not ready for a meal of text-books. If delight in reading anything above the standard of illustrated magazines is to be acquired it can only come by careful nurture, not the pace at all of text-book manipulation for examination purposes.

So we eschew the slavish use of text-books. Teachers have their own supply of background books and occasionally sets of books from which to work, but the

general method is to work without them, except in arithmetic, where it is helpful to be able to turn to many examples of varied complexity. It saves time but it is not better than the work put up on the blackboard by the teacher who knows more surely than the text-book what his children can do. We can find all the language exercises we need from any batch of scripts obtained in the classroom. We have learnt or are learning that practice makes perfect in writing, no less than in any form of handicraft. So we encourage writing with purpose first and try to iron out the pitfalls (the metaphor may seem inadequate, but it is deliberate) of punctuation, spelling and expression later, in much the same way as training in perspective follows the child's attempt at painting. We tell stories, observe, imitate, seek good models widely from good writing anywhere. Proficiency does not come from books of language exercises.

Text books stay with us in such numbers in schools only because teachers straight from college realise their own inadequacy, depend on ready-made aids, find the aids become a habit and fail often enough to devise their own schemes, even although their own intelligence would class the methods they employ as stop-gap rather than inspired. Grammar school syllabuses, with set books like straight-jackets, certainly fix a course from which deviation brings examination failure. So text-books and text-book methods remain a guide and a limitation. Without examinations it is easier and better to do without them. The corollary is that teachers have enough confidence to plan and illustrate their own courses. Many have, and also the strength and ability to stretch their pupils in a way that would earn the respect of the critics if they knew about it.

Without text-books what would a fairly representative lesson in science, history or geography be like? The subject would be introduced with as much illustration as possible. The bench experiment in the science lesson would be paralleled by the blackboard illustration, the model, the film strip or the broadcast. The explanatory or discussion part of the lesson would be succeeded by some activity, copying the illustration, making notes or amplifying those provided and seeking further information from the reference books in the classroom or the school library.

Here is our point of departure. We amass reference books as admirable as Puffin Picture Books and the *Oxford Junior Encyclopaedia* in place of text-books. We seek to put hundreds of history books on our shelves instead of four or five sets of forty in each. In this way we can allot individual tasks to the more able pupils and seek to encourage ways of finding out that are more natural than the traditional school way of saying, "Open your books at page sixty and go on from where we left off." The incentive of tracing the development of children's games or of transport or of the age in which Flora Macdonald wore the dress that can be tried on or sketched at the Castle Museum keeps our senior children working on their studies at home as well as at school. The interest of the subject, the business of working it through, is charged with enough practical activity to counter-balance book-work, which can become a burden to our pupils. This is where we part company with the academic studies of the able grammar school children.

The project method is not for all to try. Although at its very best very rewarding, it can be most exhausting



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and demands a capacity of physical endurance that would tax many people too hard. Once started a project has some of the characteristics of a paper chase. There are so many scents to follow. Recently a study of the Civil War took us to nearby Marston Moor. We walked over the battlefield noting the identifiable features remaining from plans and accounts of the battle. With the co-operation of the Castle Museum, armour and weapons used at the battle were worn and copied. Records there, at the Minster and Public Libraries were consulted for evidence concerning the leaders, the disposition and equipment of their armies, the state of the battle at various times and the effect of the result on the subsequent stages of the war. Using a six-inch ordnance survey map to guide them, the boys and girls of Form 4A made a scale plan and placed on it models made after careful observation of uniforms, weapons and armament. The pay and lot of the soldiers then was contrasted with that of our modern army from information supplied from the local barracks.

Other project studies have included the building of our school, past and present homes, local government and social studies. They have given our pupils fine opportunities of visiting places, meeting people, studying records, giving lecturettes, making drawings and models and writing accounts or tabulating results. They have involved our history teacher in mountains of work. She would describe them as rewarding in the extreme. They have eaten up time, but they have brought history to life. They have aroused interest in our city, a good starting-point for any historical student. They have linked social, with economic, with political history in a way that simplifies explanation because the studies seem real.

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It would be quite wrong to create the impression that we set more stock on the project method than any other. What arises from it, the elementary research or foraging method, we use widely in various subjects. Their own experience will take them only so far. An opportune series of articles appears in the local press on fishing in local streams. The books in the library have been chosen for just this kind of situation. The amateur fisherman in Form 3A assembles his material, discusses with his English teacher how he is going to present it, makes drawings that reflect his own experience by the riverside and introduces adventures of his own into the narrative or recounts wrinkles gained from other local fishermen.

We find the same calls made on individual choice and decision in housecraft lessons. Basic teaching is given in the first two years and then when girls have become familiar with their methods and equipment problems are set that test the combination of various skills. When in doubt they go to their note-books, to the reference books on cookery, laundering, care of the hands and feet or elementary beauty culture. They have seen it done, they have done it themselves, they have recorded it and now they are asked to remember all that and answer several demands. They make mistakes, they forget, they discover where they went wrong and are less likely in future to repeat the same error.

Through all this training there is an attempt made to develop self-reliance. In art and handwork boys and girls are asked to observe what has been done well by others, but they are encouraged where possible to make and use their own design, in embroidery, in weaving a scarf, in decorating a book bound by themselves. This



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is no less true of physical exercise and games. The teaching is towards group and team activity in which each performer makes himself proficient, finding the movement and timing that aids his natural skill.

The finest teaching method is that which promotes confidence in the weakest and offers freedom of speech and movement, doing and making. The creation of a state of mind in which pupils are not afraid to try is the first important step to educating them. As long as shyness or fear, indifference or obstinacy exist, no advance is possible. Manuals on teaching method often ignore this first proviso. Mark Twain tells how he once went through all his best stories and became gloomier and gloomier because a man sitting right in front of him wouldn't smile. Later he learnt he was deaf. Teachers have this experience. They work hard but cannot break the barrier. Then suddenly something quite simple happens. The teacher drops his pencil, the child picks it up. They trip over each other on the playing field. One catches the other out at cricket. A link is made and work can begin. The first teaching aid is making common cause. It is immediately noticeable in the written work that is produced and where any practical help is needed.

'The most valuable piece of furniture in the classroom is the teacher,' said one headmaster as he watched the rush to add visual aids to the school stock after the war. He knew rightly that the teacher must be master of the machine and must know when to use the film strip projector and when not to use it. Indiscriminate use of all visual aids blunts their value and progressively weakens the effect on the receptive class. Our first impulse was to run the strip right through. The teacher



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retailed the notes to the class. It was novel and interesting and did for a time. Then we began to show only a selection of the pictures to illustrate our lesson. Presently it became one picture only that added something to the other illustration that the teacher had prepared. Such discrimination in the use of visual aids is to be commended.

Film shows or slides after school are another matter. Scores of children have stayed behind willingly to use slides lent by the Imperial Institute and to enjoy the teacher's explanatory comments. The lantern lecture has advantages over the travel film shown at the cinema, especially when the teacher linking the slides knows the country and can supply his own personal experiences. Generally speaking, selection is all.

So it is with school broadcasting programmes. 'Never the place and the time and the loved one all together,' was the poet's lament. It could be the teacher's too, trying to fit broadcast lessons in to his own time-table. A still more severe obstacle is suitability. Broadcast lessons are expertly planned and excellently presented. They draw on material often beyond the reach of the teacher. The pamphlets announcing them are splendidly illustrated and are issued well in advance. In themselves the lessons reach a high standard, make demands on our attention and provoke thought and discussion. Teaching units have been shown to training colleges illustrating the lesson given, the suggestions for further work and the evidence of work done in the schools after such prompting. The results are usually very good. Obstinate perhaps we prefer to construct our own syllabus, employing only such broadcasts as appear suitable to illustrate our work or serve as a variation

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of the method being used. Following a whole series like 'Looking at Things' or 'Poets and Poetry' we learn the strength and weakness of school broadcasts. The material is excellent, often far beyond what the class teacher could hope to produce if he only had one lesson to give in the whole week and not forty. But the remoteness of control, the programme's inevitable progress even when the class has missed the point, the presentation of a too ambitious assortment of facts ('a month's science in one lesson,' says one science master), the impossibility of suiting everyone's scheme of work, the necessity for extremely close attention for twenty minutes or more, all lead us to applaud school broadcasting and use it sparingly. Visual aids and school broadcasting are to the wise teacher more than ports or happy havens wherein he can discharge all his responsibility for his schemes of work. They are aids to be used appropriately. Presently television lessons will open many more windows on our world. Being visual as well as audible they should make at school as great an appeal as television makes each evening at home. We must learn to make good use of them or children's minds and our own will be bemused with a welter of ill-sorted illustration that cloud instead of illuminating issues.

The methods employed in teaching slower children are those described here taken at a quieter pace. Even although it may be necessary as in the junior school to employ 'Look and Say' and 'Phonetic' methods of reading, and though much diagnosis goes into the causes of weakness in Arithmetic, these children respond best to patient encouragement. They develop most freely in a friendly atmosphere. They fall and are helped

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up again repeatedly. There is no magic formula but hard work from the teacher to build up a will, a curiosity to learn. With some it comes but slightly. Others respond and do as well as they are able. The changes have to be rung frequently, even though partial failure in some process must be admitted. Much of their practical work becomes encouraging and even worth while. Would examination incentives help them? Not at all. Here too character and health and example determine the reward.



## VII

### THE LIBRARY

WE ACCEPTED the challenge of a large well-lighted room for our school library with pleasure. Our previous library was housed in a single cupboard that could be dragged from its classroom into the school hall, there to satisfy a handful of readers. Now we have large windows down the whole south-west side and halfway down the north side of the room. Fluorescent lighting was provided. At one end was fixed shelving and, at the other, magazine shelves. In between, four tall oak shelves were arranged to form three bays and the remaining space was taken up by five round and five rectangular tables and forty chairs. Further small portable shelves could be drawn under the windows. Display boarding was provided on two sides of the room. There was a radio panel for receiving broadcasts. We made ourselves a newspaper stand and bought pictures and bowls for decoration. Next door was the bookcraft room and in between was a storeroom in which hard-used books could be left to be repaired at very reasonable cost. We bought ourselves filing cabinets and an electric stylus. All we needed were books.

Unlike many county schools we could not use stocks provided by the authority in very large numbers. Six hundred books were lent us on a scheme devised by an Education and Library Sub-Committee formed to help

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schools acquire books, and we have used this to provide our fiction reading. Very occasionally we accept a non-fiction book for which there has been a demand that we cannot satisfy from our own stock but, generally, we choose fiction when we renew 200 books each term.

To begin with our library grant was £15 a year. There was no initial capital grant from which to provide books. The School Fund was built up in devious ways by social efforts and parent support and we had useful gifts from friends of the school.

How did we know what to buy? I prepared a questionnaire and from it found out what the children in this school were reading. I went to the public and branch libraries, talked with the children's librarians and made lists there. I kept my own reading up to date. Many aids to choosing books exist. I followed *The Times Literary and Educational Supplement* reviews, the intelligent daily and Sunday newspapers, the weekly magazines, educational and general, the School Library Association draft lists, *Four to Fourteen*, *The Junior Bookshelf*, *What Children Read* and other publications. I found them helpful, but not nearly as valuable as keeping close to my own school's reading taste and exploring the bookshelves and making friends with the booksellers.

Our children's reading lists proved once again that Enid Blyton's position is unassailable, but they also gave me information about some reference books. My prompting for the school library directed some children's attention to their own home reading, and the building of their own library. Numbers given in Form 1A showed that some few children had eighty or ninety books on shelves in their own bedroom, while one had as few as four. By the second year the child with four

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books only, had twenty of her own. The titles and authors given suggested the subjects interesting children at all ages and we built on that information.

Complementary to the school library were to be our form room libraries. Presently I was able to see adequate supplies of reading material in addition to literary readers in every form room. I sought help from second-hand bookshops and bought books of excellent value at most reasonable prices. To these I added many Puffin story books, strengthening the back of these and the Puffin picture books in our bookcraft classes.

'How did you provide books for your C and D form readers? Isn't it a waste of time having a school library for them?' We have mentioned in other chapters that the children coming to us at eleven plus from the primary schools can read. We encourage that growing ability with short readers full of action, with books of their own choice from home, with any book, in short, that will help them forward and make them want to read more. A supply of Biggles, Worralls, Gimlet books came into my hands. I passed them on to Form 4D. They were warmly received.

Quite often 'C' and 'D' form children prefer to be read to by the teacher. I find that a well-presented story such as *The Snow Goose*, *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and selections from *Duveen* can be enjoyed. There was surprise recently that poems of some difficulty read in the excellent B.B.C. School's series, 'Poets and Poetry', were liked by so many children. It is equally true of books and all reading. If it is well enough done the appeal can be very successful and the desire to read more for themselves can be encouraged. We seek well-illustrated books for our poorer readers. Puffin picture



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books have been mentioned. They make an appeal to the non-literary child who wants to follow his interest simply and directly. We try to help and develop that interest in the library periods.

Meanwhile, for those who can read reasonable well, and silent reading tests can be an awkward reminder of the lack of understanding that some children possess, we go on to provide individual readers for all purposes, instead of sets and limited instruction. We seek to promote wider reading and are constantly looking for books that capture the imagination and make a ready appeal. *Kon Tiki*, *Elephant Bill* and *The Wooden Horse* are such books in our reading course.

A questionnaire on the broadcast programmes listened to by children offered another guiding line or confirmed known facts. We found them keenest on quick, exciting action with a slight background problem to be solved and some humorous incident to help the story along. 'Suspense' and 'P.C. 49' were favourite listening programmes. They liked entertaining character portrayal in dialect, as in the Al Read broadcasts. They thoroughly enjoyed family stories with mistakes, difficulties and fun larger than life. In that setting they were willing to accept easily acquired information. As they grow older they complain that if they stay in at home to read they are given jobs or have to mind the younger children, but of course there are the real distractions of films, theatre and clubs which usually make easier demands on their attention and fulfil the growing need to be out and about with their friends.

We have sought advice from the children and accepted many of their recommendations. Many of course do not know what they would like until they see it, so I

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have invited local booksellers to bring their children's books in to school. On each occasion I have arranged for parents to come in during the evening and some have bought books there and then for their home libraries. Then, too, I have allowed children to go round form by form, C's and D's and all, and have asked them to make lists of books that they would like to look at again. This is a very fertile approach, as the introduction of children to vast stocks of attractive books is bound to stimulate interest.

Our children are allowed to choose their own prizes for Open Day from a friendly bookseller. He gives them every assistance and members of my staff go with them. But the choice is their own. Here is a typical list:

*The British Empire in Pictures*  
*Birds, Trees and Flowers*  
*Wonders of Nature*  
*The Two Cadets*  
*Ups and Downs*  
*Insects and Birds*  
*Nature Lover's Book*  
*General Knowledge*  
*Things for a Boy to Make*  
*The Three Musketeers*  
*Nests and Eggs*  
*Out with Romany by Moor and Dale*  
*Birds*  
*Kidnapped in Cornwall*  
*Our of Doors with Nomad*  
*Classical Stories*

The staff, too, make their selection, as we have to consider subject needs as well as recreative ones. School

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societies create interest in certain kinds of reading. The Pets' Club mentioned elsewhere sent many children looking for books about birds and animals, for more precise information than they could get at home. Children's requests, subject needs and hobbies provide the guiding lines for buying many suitable books.

A list of books on Ships will help to show how a section grows until most enquiries can be met:

<i>True Tales of Sail and Steam</i>	Shalimar	Oxford
<i>The Sailing Ship</i>	Anderson	Harrap
<i>Divers and Diving</i>	Whyte	Pitman
<i>Sailing Small Waters</i>	Reynolds	Bodley Head
<i>All About Ships</i>		Perry Colour
'Do You Know?' books		Books
<i>The Shape of Ships</i>	McDowell	Hutchinson
<i>Inland Waterways</i>	Schildrop	Methuen
<i>The High Seas</i>	Thornhill	Metheun
'Get to Know' series		
<i>The Story of Ships</i>	Ellacott	Methuen
<i>The Story of Shipbuilding</i>	Arthur	Odhams
'Wealth in Industry' series		
<i>Seafarers, Ships and Cargoes</i>	Brooks and Duce	U.L.P.
<i>Transport by Sea</i>	Redmayne	Murray
<i>British Marine Painting</i>	Warner	Batsford
<i>Something New in Model Boat</i>		
<i>Building</i>	Matheson	Hutchinson
<i>Ships of the World</i>	Ackroyd	Ward, Lock
<i>Adventures of the Lifeboat</i>		
<i>Service</i>	Saville	Macdonald
<i>Start 'em Sailing</i>	Aymar	Jenkins
<i>British Ships and Shipbuilders</i>	Blake	Collins



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### *Hobbies—Plans for Own Canoe*

<i>All About Ships and Shipping</i>	Harback	Faber
<i>Ships, Boats and Craft</i>	Payne	Jenkins
<i>Exploration and Adventure</i>	Collinson	Allen
<i>Camping by Water</i>	Carrington & Cavendish	Davies
<i>Canoeing</i>	MacCarthy	Pitman
<i>Docks and Harbours</i>	Dempster	Methuen

We provide a daily newspaper and a selection of good magazines which are continually being added to by children and friends, who have clean copies to pass on. A corner of the Library is set aside for H.M.S.O. Careers pamphlets, and the many circulars that come in from travel agencies are also displayed.

We do all we can to advertise the library. The children know what store we set by it. Pupils use it for library periods and go to it from ordinary lessons to look up material for accounts they are writing or to search out illustrations. We have our own circular called the *Library Bulletin*. A selection from a typical issue which is put up on each form room notice board will give some idea of the intention in promoting it.

## BECKFIELD SCHOOL LIBRARY BULLETIN

### *Introduction*

Our library is beginning to reach the stage when it can be relied upon to supply the answers to most of the questions asked of it. Recently interest in tropical fish in Form 2D called for a book on Indoor Aquaria. It was pleasant to be able to find the very book required was already on the shelves. So with all your hobbies and interests. Find out more about

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them from the books in our library. If we haven't been able to meet your enquiries tell us and if possible recommend any books that you have found helpful.

In addition to school subjects, hobbies and interests, we have tried to afford you the opportunity of reading about the kinds of jobs you might take up when you leave school. Another section deals with some of the books that might help you. Books are servants and friends. Know and respect them.

READ FOR ENJOYMENT

READ TO LEARN

### SOME NEW BOOKS

<i>Railway Magazines</i>	
<i>Royal Air Force in Pictures</i>	
<i>Chambers' Encyclopaedia</i> (10)	
<i>At Grips with Everest</i>	Stanley Snaith
<i>British Marine Painting</i>	Oliver Warner
<i>Stanley Gibbon's Simplified</i>	
<i>Stamp Catalogue 1940</i>	
<i>Dogs Since 1900</i>	A. Croxton-Smith
<i>Children's Hour Annual</i>	May E. Jenkin
<i>Made in China</i>	Cornelia Spencer
<i>The Starry Heavens</i>	Ellison Hawks
<i>Concerning Soccer</i>	John Arlott
<i>The M.C.C. Cricket Coaching</i>	
<i>Book</i>	
<i>The Kon Tiki Expedition</i>	Thor Heyerdahl
<i>Wheels on the Road</i>	S. E. Ellacott
<i>Manual on Diving</i>	
<i>Pears Encyclopaedia</i>	
<i>New Illustrated Universal</i>	
<i>Reference Book</i>	
<i>Living Dangerously</i>	F. Spencer-Chapman

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*Swimming—Do it this Way*      Richard Small  
*Teach Yourself Cycling*      R. C. Shaw

## BOOK REVIEWS

### *The Colditz Story*

*The Colditz Story* is written by P. R. Reid. It is a very vivid account of prison camp life and of the characters who occupy the camp. The action takes place in Colditz Castle, which during both World Wars was used as a prison camp for the 'Bad Boys', or men who had escaped from other camps and had been recaptured. Mr. Reid, who was a prisoner himself, tells how the French and British prisoners teased and made themselves regular nuisances to the German guards.

There are some very amusing incidents in the book and many escapes are planned, but the Germans are clever and the plans fail. A Frenchman does get out, however, and this helps considerably to boost up the prisoners' morale. The author was made escape officer in Colditz Castle so that he had to organise all escapes. In the end he escapes with two fellow men and safely reaches England. This book, which is very thrilling from beginning to end, is a Pan Publication and costs 2s. 6d. Another exciting book is the Pan publication of *Escape or Die* by Paul Brickhill; this is also an exciting book of escapes carried out in World War II.

### *The Little White Horse* by Elizabeth Goudge

I have thoroughly enjoyed reading this fascinating story by Elizabeth Goudge. It concerns Maria Merryweather, Miss Helitrope and Wiggins the dog. Maria



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has been left an orphan at the age of thirteen, when the story begins in the year 1842. She and her governess are forced to leave their London home owing to financial difficulties. They take their few possessions by train to Moonacre Manor, which is in the West Country. Here they have many exciting adventures. As they are nearing Moonacre Manor, Maria sees the little white horse for the first time, as it flashes through the park in the moonlight. She mentions this to Miss Helitrope but the governess tells her that it is only her imagination.

How mysterious the Manor is. Who is Zachariah? Who places hot water and Maria's clothes neatly on her little table, for the door is much too small for any grown-up person to enter her room? Why are Wroff and Periwinkle such strange animals? What is the little white horse that appeared for one swift moment beneath the silver moon?

There are many mysteries to be solved in this magical web of *The Little White Horse*. This story deserves the strongest recommendation.

## LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

For advice and guidance on your future career there are a large number of pamphlets available in the library, and it is pleasing to see a regular demand.

However, those who prefer a fuller picture of life in different jobs may wish to read a full-length book on the subject, and this may take the form of fiction, a story written round a character performing the job in which you are interested, or non-fiction, a detailed account of all the duties and experiences to be met with in your chosen career.

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Here are a few titles, and the careers of which they tell:

FICTION	NON-FICTION
Nursing:	
<i>The Sue Barton Stories</i> by Helena Dore-Boylston	<i>How I became an Engine Driver</i> by Norman McKillop
<i>The Buntz Brown Stories</i> by Barbara Wilcox	<i>How I became a Detective</i> by Christopher Peacock
<i>Jean's Tour of a Hospital</i> by Doreen Swinburne	<i>How I became a Nursing Sister</i> by Joan Morwyn
Medical:	
<i>Students at Queen's</i> by J. S. Arey	<i>The Postman</i> by Maxwell Taylor
	<i>The Air-Line Crew</i> by T. E. Scott-Chard
Farming:	
<i>Farmer Jim</i> by Derek Chapman	

For girls, there are interesting articles to assist them to plan their future in both *The Girls' World* and *The Years of Grace*, where they will find, among others, the following careers described: Mannequin, Buyer, Film Actress, Schoolteacher, Secretary and Civil Servant. They are all worth reading about, even if you can only choose one of them!

### FORM 3B RECOMMEND

Humorous Books	
Title	Author
<i>Professor Branestawm</i>	Norman Hunter
<i>My Friend Mr. Leakey</i>	J. B. S. Haldane
Mystery Stories	
<i>The Thirty-Nine Steps</i>	John Buchan

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<i>The Black Dog Mystery</i>	Ellery Queen, Jnr.
<i>The Lone House Mystery</i>	J. Jefferson Farjeon
<i>The Secret of the Silk</i>	Agness M. Miall

### Sea Stories

<i>The 'Sea Urchin' Stories</i>	Douglas Stanhope
<i>Submarine City</i>	J. W. Collins
<i>The Ship of Adventure</i>	Enid Blyton
<i>Deep Sea Raiders</i>	R. Montgomery
<i>Masterman Ready</i>	Capt. Marryat

### Animal Stories

<i>Dog Crusoe</i>	R. M. Ballantyne
<i>Tale of Two Collies</i>	E. W. Betenson
<i>Romany in the Fields</i>	Bramwell Evens
<i>Northwards with Nomad</i>	Norman Ellison
<i>Nature's Playground</i>	Cordelia Leigh

### Adventure Stories

<i>South with Scott</i>	Sir Edward Evans
<i>Bunkle and Belinda</i>	E. M. Pardoe
<i>Prester John</i>	John Buchan
<i>The 'Jungle Doctor' Stories</i>	Paul White
<i>The 'Five' Stories</i>	Enid Blyton

### School Stories for Girls

<i>The 'Naughtiest Girl' Stories</i>	Enid Blyton
<i>The 'Abbey Girls' Stories</i>	Elsie J. Oxenham
<i>The 'Chalet' Stories</i>	Elinor Brent-Dyer
<i>The 'Dimsie' Stories</i>	D. F. Bruce

### Girls' Career Stories

<i>The Dancing Star</i>	Gladys Malvern
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### Air Stories

<i>War Wings</i>	R. Montgomery
<i>The 'Biggles' Stories</i>	Capt. W. E. Johns
<i>The Wonder Book of the R.A.F.</i>	
<i>Modern British Aeroplanes</i>	Charles Gardner



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### Hobbies

<i>Britain's Motor Industry</i>	H. C. Castle
<i>Birds of England</i>	Eric Pochin
<i>Locomotives of Sir Nigel Gresley</i>	O. S. Nock
<i>Fishing</i>	Crabtree
<i>The Aeromodeller Annual</i>	

## THE COMICS YOU READ

### (Second Year)

How do our second-year children compare with our first-year in their enthusiasm for comic papers? Do they read as many and are they the same as those read in the first year? Do more children in this year become members of the public library?

To the first question the answer is 'No'. Against the 373 comics read by children in the first year the figure for the second year is 298, and there are 10 children fewer. 2B are the most voracious comic readers of the four classes; they take 97 papers each week, 2A take 93 and 2C take 75. 2D take only 33, considerably less than the 70 read by the corresponding form in the first year. There are 34 second-year children (14 girls and 20 boys) who take no comics at all, and two boys who each take 9 have the doubtful honour of spending the most money per week on this form of entertainment.

As I guessed last month, *Beano* and *Dandy* are still the popular favourites though not so widely read as in the first year. *School Friend* is still most widely read by the girls (36 of them) and remains very popular with many boys. After *Beano* and *Dandy*, the boys favour the *Eagle*, *Rover*, *Film Fun* and *Knock-Out*. Lesser favourites with the girls are *Girls' Crystal*,

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*Radio Fun* and *Knock-Out*, and with the boys, *Hotspur*, *Wizard* and *Adventure*. The first five, however, remain as in the first year: *Beano* (57), *Dandy* (56), *School Friend* (45), *Eagle* (25) and *Film Fun* (21), but none are read by so many children in this year as in the first.

Do the second year, then, read more books than the first year—or don't they get as much spending money? The first explanation hardly seems to fit as the number of public library members (85) is only one more than that of the first year. Perhaps you are slowly beginning to 'grow out' of comics? We will know more about that when we look, next month, at the figures for the third year.

Each form has a library period each week of between thirty and forty minutes. The children are taught how to behave in the library, how to find, handle and replace books in their correct positions. They talk about fiction and non-fiction books and discover on which shelves to look for the various subjects. The choice of book and author is continued to include binding and layout and illustration. The classes discuss favourite books and authors and spend some time reading books of their own choice. They consider the information to be found on the title page and on the cover in other lessons. Later they attempt reviews of books or read to the class passages that are exciting or sad, amusing or mysterious. They recommend books to each other and look up and tabulate information about their favourite authors.

They go on from this easy introduction to finding books in the library and learning more about suitable authors, to study reference books. Encyclopaedias can

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be closed books to some of our children until they are shown how to use them. Simple assignments with guide and question cards help them to play detectives and find out where information is hidden. Gradually most of the children know how to find out from reference books what they are required to know.

They learn that while the fiction is arranged in alphabetical order the non-fiction is shelved by subject and not by author. They follow the shelves by the modified Dewey system which we employ. Assignments test their understanding of the contents table and the use of the index. They do written and oral work and spend some time reading books recommended by their friends.

The senior boys and girls use the index to find topics suggested and make specific biographies, sometimes illustrating the facts discovered in poster form. They learn to use our card-index catalogues and give lectures on the material gathered. Sometimes they do geographical or historical research singly or in groups. They make question cards on a book of their own choice for other children to answer. They do book reviews and recommend reading as in previous years.

The work cards method is similar in intention to the assignments set in housecraft lessons for senior pupils or the individual choice allowed when the basic skills have been acquired in handicrafts. Our children take less kindly to book work than some at the grammar school, but many love reading and most are willing to read to find out how to do something that interests them mightily. The practical child can seek such advice from his teacher and add to his knowledge of ways and means in the reference library. The literary reader can find



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story, play or poem to hold him by the hour. The poor reader can follow illustrations and easy directions for finding what he wants.

From the public library and from the booksellers we have lists of current publications or acquisitions. We encourage membership of the public library and have evidence that many of our children are active borrowers. So great was the enthusiasm at one period that the local branch librarian appealed to us to ask the children not to visit the library in such numbers. The librarians have visited our school library and know us well. When we are doing research work that we cannot cover from our own slender library, willing loans of books are made. A series of lecturettes in our Form 2A produced this response in books from the public library:

<i>Title</i>	<i>Author</i>	<i>Publisher</i>
<i>Flight Today</i>	Nayler & Ower	Oxford
<i>Building Today</i>	Briggs	Oxford
<i>Bird Life in Cornwall</i>	Ryves	Collins
<i>Rugby Football</i>	Jones	Pitman
<i>Air Mail</i>	Monk & Winter	Perry Press
<i>Flight Today and Tomorrow</i>	Winter	Blackie
<i>Enjoying Pictures</i>	Ward	Phoenix Hse.
<i>The Story of Painting</i>	Allen	Faber
<i>British Airways</i>	Sprigg	Nelson
<i>Famous Paddle Steamers</i>	Hambleton	Marshall
<i>Animal Ways</i>	Boulenger	Ward, Lock
<i>Wild Birds in Britain</i>	Gordon	Batsford
<i>Applique Design and Method</i>	Mann	Black
<i>What a Thread Can Do</i>	Fisher	Collins
<i>The Seasons and the Fisherman</i>	Darling	Cambridge
<i>The National Gallery for the Young</i>	Tabor	Methuen
<i>Boxing and Physical Culture</i>	Inch	Gale & Polden

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<i>First Aid for Everybody</i>	Goldsmith	Faber
<i>Man and His Creatures</i>	Knapp, Fisher	Routledge
<i>Tales of the Wild Wood</i>	Richmond	Routledge
<i>Improving Your Tennis</i>	Hughes	Nelson
<i>Fabre's Book of Insects</i>	Stowell	Harrap
<i>Farmer Jim</i>	Chapman	Heinemann
<i>Cooking is Fun</i>	Russell	Methuen
<i>Boys' and Girls' Own Swim Book</i>	Hedges	Crowther
<i>Mammals and Reptiles</i>	Hodgson	Black
<i>British Trees</i>	Hall	Collins
<i>The Book of the Wild</i>	Chappell	Thorsons
<i>How to Score a Century</i>	Sly	Thorsons
<i>101 Things for a Boy to Make</i>	Horth	Batsford
<i>Boxing for Schools</i>	Cleaver	Methuen
<i>Riding for Boys and Girls</i>	Hope	Eng. Univ. Press
<i>Getting to Know Wild Flowers</i>	Browning	Collins
<i>Embroidery Mary</i>	Warner	Harrap

Many of those books have now been added to our own shelves.

One of us chooses the books, another member of staff takes all the library periods and a third classifies catalogues and issues lending library copies. We do not allow our non-fiction books out on loan as our library periods would be spoilt. When we have enough books and can afford to duplicate some copies, they we will be able to allow children to borrow non-fiction copies.

The library is generally open at break and at lunch-time for issuing books. Boy and girl librarians assist in this duty and in keeping the shelves straight. We lend on the average 500 books a month. This total always rises when new books come in and drops towards the end of the period before the next change is due.

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Our bookbinding room is a great help. After books have been accessioned they are taken there to have book labels and pockets glued on and the Dewey number printed on the spine. Stouter covers and repairs are possible. Book jackets are used for display. We have an Albion type printing press bought by the School fund. A few boys can be trained each year to set up the type and work the press. Simple books of poems have been made and an understanding of the work and quality of good bookbinding and printing is made possible.

Our library serves our school needs and interests and gives us pleasure. We hope to form good taste. We try to create an atmosphere in which reading for information or enjoyment is normal and right. As in all our work we do not always succeed. But when we see our pupils choosing well their own prizes for Open Day or bringing to school books of their own that seem very good choice, we are rewarded.



## VIII

### EDUCATIONAL VISITS

EDUCATIONAL VISITS do not necessarily imply bad manner on the Continent or crocodiles of bored children filing past exhibits that mean nothing to them. Between the over-rigorous planning of earlier days, when to be out of school at all during school hours gave one a guilty feeling which one could only allay by justification through notes, and the aimlessness and insouciance of the worst examples found recently, there is a rich way of introducing children to new people, places and experiences that most schools employ. It is like striking a balance between formal teaching and bustling activities. Except for a gifted few the middle course has everything to commend it.

In the heady days of 1947 when our authority became willing to support financially, within limits, mass excursions or private parties, we sent our second year for a day in the country. The children paid a little so that they would value what was being offered them and three bus loads drew away. Their day's work and the conclusion drawn from it are described in a report made at the time by our science master.

OUT-OF-DOORS SCHOOL—12TH JUNE, 1947

About 100 of the middle-form scholars of a York secondary modern school were recently privileged to

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experience what may be—educationally speaking—a foretaste of things to come.

Soon after morning Assembly had ended three motor coaches arrived at the school to convey the lucky children to Coxwold. It was not an ordinary summer outing on which they were bent, but a day's work in the open air. They had definite tasks to perform and observations to make. Certain general ideas that they normally study in history, geography, biology and science had been particularised with respect to the district they were to visit.

Arriving at Coxwold, their first concern was mainly things historical. They examined outside and inside the beautiful fifteenth-century church, noting its monuments, the 'Breeches' Bible, and looking carefully for the mouse—trade mark of a well known modern craftsman. Shandy Hall and Newburgh Priory were next visited. Before leaving Coxwold the shade temperature and atmospheric pressure were taken and recorded.

From Coxwold the party proceeded by 'bus to Byland, where, on the kindly grass and in view of the gaunt abbey remains they ate, with stimulated appetite, the lunch they had brought with them. Whilst still at ease on the grass, and comfortably replete within, they were directed by their teachers to cast their eyes over the beautiful scenery on every side—to the hills, covered in places very much as nature herself had ordained, in others as man had more or less influenced; to the low-lying land, devoted to crops or pasture. Everywhere grew plants—but not the same sorts in all places: why? Even the stone walls had their share of vegetation. How could plants possibly grow in such barren places? The essential needs of all plants were brought to mind.

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Next came the climb, in genial sunshine, up Wass Bank. The sun felt stranger on these steep slopes. Why? On the map of the district with which each child was provided had been drawn contour lines. These now began to mean something—in fact they gave quite a lot of useful information about heights and steepness of slopes: no need to ask ‘How high up are we now?’ or ‘Does the road get any steeper?’

A halt was called at the quarry where conditions otherwise hidden below the surface could be seen. How shallow a depth of dark soil capped the yellowish-brown rock; not much space there for deep-striking roots! Small pieces of rock were taken for examination later on at school.

Up again, to the top where moor prevailed and heather dominated the scene. Why heather? A little scooping disclosed no soil as we know it in our gardens and allotments. On the surface was an inch or so of the peaty remains of bygone heather. Under that was a whitish, sandy soil greatly resembling ashes. It looked—and was—washed out. Its vital mineral salts had been leached away by the rain of many seasons, aided by the acid substances from the peat; but no doubt the ground lower down had benefited by its loss. Up here it was colder—3 degrees colder than down below—in spite of several hours’ warming up by the unobscured sun since we had taken the temperature at Coxwold. There was more wind too. Cold, damp, windy, no salts, no lime—no place for the beneficent bacteria whose activities turn dead plant remains into good food material for the living.

Samples were collected of heather plant, of peat and of the ash-like soil. But time passes quickly on occasions



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such as these and a move had to be made downhill again. The school aneroid barometer was carried in the hands on the way down. At Coxwold it had read 29.48 deg.; on the hill top at a height of about 800 feet, it had gone back to 28.88 deg., and there was quite a wide gap between the brass indicator needle, fixed at Coxwold, and the moving black one. But as the descent progressed, the black pointer moved steadily up, lessening the gap between the two. One felt rather like an airman watching his altimeter. That feeling was even more pronounced later on in the bus when, with barometer on the knees, one watched the pointer move to left or right as the bus climbed or descended on the way home.

What a struggle was going on in the hedgerows for light and air; yet many different plants had managed to secure and hold a place. True, some were thrusters and scrambled ruthlessly over the rest. Others, too, seemed to be doing their best to smother their neighbours with their large, spreading leaves or lofty growth. No doubt there was great competition below ground as well, amongst the thirsty roots. Some trees were very selfish compared with others. The oak did allow considerable light to penetrate its branches so that shrubs and a variety of plants could grow in its shade; but the beech, with its horizontal branches and flat, dovetailed leaves, did not let much through and few plants grew beneath it.

Flowers were collected from different situations for pressing. Stones were overturned to disclose many skulking animal forms—centipedes, millipedes, woodlice, spiders and beetles. Moths, butterflies and bees were observed, feeding at flowers or going about their lawful business—though what that was one could not

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ascertain. Some excitement arose when one enthusiastic collector boxed a fly from whose abdomen projected a wicked-looking egg-depositor, mistakenly assumed to be a sting.

Trees, shrubs, 'flowers', birds, mammals, insects and a host of lowlier animal forms—all living together interdependent—what an intricate and amazing things this 'Web of Life' is!

How much of all this did children of such tender years really understand and digest? Well, the writer of this article, who was one of the party, has for many years made the study of such things a hobby, yet he feels that he understands but little himself. That little is nevertheless enough to render life much more rich to him and to add considerably to his appreciation of the beautiful scenery our country has to offer in such profusion. A start must be made some time, and the earlier the better. The bodies of the fortunate youngsters benefited for certain by healthy exercise in the pure country air; it is equally certain, as evidenced by the eager torrent of questions launched at their teachers, that their minds too received a stimulus which could not be other than beneficial.

Exercises based on the day's experiences remain to be done and from these assessment of those things which are capable of being tested will be made; but perhaps it will prove, as so often happens in the process of education, that the chief benefits derived from the excursion will be imponderable effects on mind, character and outlook which defy analysis or examination.

We made other second-year excursions in the following years, visiting at Ripon Paint and Pottery works



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and agricultural buildings and repeating the day at Coxwold. The weaknesses of such journeys having been fully considered we turned to smaller visits derived more naturally from our work in school.

Recreational visits were arranged at varying seasons to Youth Hostels, and cycling groups were encouraged to explore their county at week-ends and in the holidays. Presently a school camp at Grange in Borrowdale appealed to staff and children and with only one break groups have gone into the Lake District for a holiday every summer. Before the first party set off parents and children were invited to attend a briefing meeting where with maps and pictures the camp area and the walks proposed were described by the leader, our geography teacher. Travel, cost, provisions, clothing and footwear and insurance were gone into and the meeting ended with a pleasing sense of anticipation that was fully realised in the holiday itself. Parents came again to hear about adventures of cooking and exploring and to see photographs taken by amateur camera men. A photographic record has been kept each year. Apart from providing enduring personal memories of happy occasions many of the photographs have been used to make geographical slides of increasing value.

This year, with the friendly assistance of an education officer who knows both schools, we arranged our first school exchange with the secondary modern school at Wigton in Cumberland. With two members of my staff in charge twenty children went to stay with children of comparable age and interests. Information exchanged between Mr. Brogden and myself included age, form, home address, family, father's occupation, accommodation and child's interests. Our children soon



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settled in new homes, attended school and went on journeys kindly and thoughtfully planned to show the character and beauty of the district. This was their programme.

### PROGRAMME FOR WEEK AT WIGTON

(July 2nd to July 9th, 1955)

- July 2nd (Sat.) York party will be met by teachers and children at Wigton Station at 1.41 p.m.  
2 p.m. York party will be welcomed at the school by the Headmaster, the Director and Deputy Director of Education, a representative number of school Governors, members of the school staff, parents of children giving hospitality in their homes.  
3 p.m. Party will have tea in the school dining hall. Party will look over the school after tea and leave for 'homes' about 5 p.m.
- July 3rd (Sunday) Free day spent with families with whom they are living.
- July 4th (Mon.) Full day in school. Normal lessons with their school form. Wrote letters home. Saw coloured films of the Lake District and compared York and Wigton.
- July 5th (Tues.) Attend Assembly in school.  
Leave at 9.30 a.m. for coach tour of Lakes: Ullswater, Kirkstone Pass, Windermere, Bowness, Ambleside, Thirlmere, Derwentwater and Keswick.
- July 6th (Wed.) Morning in school.  
Afternoon visit to Carlisle. Visits to Castle, Cathedral and Museum.

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- July 7th    Attend Assembly in school.  
(Thurs.)   Leave at 9.30 a.m. for full day's visit to Newton Rigg Farm School, near Penrith.
- July 8th    Attend Assembly in school.  
(Friday)   Leave 9.30 a.m. for visit to Lanercost Priory and Housesteads Roman Camp.
- July 9th    York party leave with Wigton party for York  
(Sat.)      at 10.51 a.m. from Wigton Station.

We on their return with their Wigton companions provided a 'home' welcome at school before parents took their new families away for the week-end. On Monday our history mistress took them to see the Mansion House silver, the Assembly Rooms, the Railway Museum and other buildings and places of historical and literary interest in York. There followed on succeeding days a visit to the Yorkshire Coast and Moors returning by Castle Howard grounds, a conducted tour of Rowntree's Cocoa Works, a full day at the Yorkshire Agricultural Show at Harrogate and finally a visit to the Castle Museum, that treasure house that brings so much of our school history to life. They saw the Craft rooms, watched plays and dances in original costume and were shown a colour film of York. So these ambassadors came to the end of their stay with us and returned to their homes bearing gifts of experience that defy analysis and friendships that persist.

York is a wonderful city in which to study history. Agriculture, Guild crafts, transport, church and civil buildings, modern factories, can so readily be linked with the lives of the people developing them. Illustrations abound in the city itself and, as though that were

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not enough, there have been gathered into the Castle Museum and presented imaginatively and most attractively evidence drawn from comparatively recent history. More will be said about the work undertaken by our children who are fortunate to make repeated educational visits during term. The Yorkshire Museum and Temple Newsham have been visited as occasion merited.

Social studies, equally convenient, are made possible by the good will of heads of departments in the city. We lead on through local government, which can be studied at first hand, to central government which we try to make more real by visits to the Houses of Parliament and as much of London's historic centre as can be seen in a day on foot and by bus. The route from York to London is thoughtfully charted and the children are given enough preparation for the day in London to rouse their curiosity. Too-detailed preparation for school visits can put out the light. We have gathered from experience what is reasonable and just.

Our school visits are meant to tie up with our teaching and with the needs of children about to leave school. There is nothing more vocational in our teaching or our visits than an attempt to discern the possible shape of things to come. Children are free to make their own choice of job, but we do not withhold guidance wherever it is required. The boys have had some visits in woodwork periods to showrooms and workshops, notably to Slingsby Sailplanes and to Robert Thompson's rooms at Kilburn. The nature of social studies visits and of a very comprehensive series of visits undertaken by the metalwork teacher with a fourth-year group of boys can be gauged from the following reports made and kept by him for future reference.



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### METALWORK CLASS VISITS

The purpose of the visits is to provide opportunity for observation of the 'layout' of Works and Plants engaged in the provision of public services, utilities and commodities used in everyday life, and so build up an appreciation of the relative importance of the Metal-craft trades to the undertakings visited.

YORK WATERWORKS COMPANY 9.10.54. 2-4.30 p.m.

Arrived at situation of the works between the north bound lines of the British Railways (NE) and the River Ouse and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles from the City centre.

Received by Mr. Brown, works foreman, and conducted to the water intake on the river bank where the system of baffles, designed to prevent the ingress of water-borne debris, was explained. The river on this day was carrying 10 ft. 6 in. of flood water, and sample showed excellent 'colour' to be contrasted later with the sparkling clearness of the processed water piped to York and the surrounding supply area.

A general survey of the filter beds ( $5\frac{1}{2}$  acres) was made, and it was pointed out that the plant contained examples of filtration covering a period of approximately two hundred years' practice. We further learned that apart from the important process of chemical and mineral treatment and the necessary speeding up of filtration to meet increased demands, the passing of the water through gravel and sand was still the essential feature of filtration used in old and modern systems. The working of the rapid filtration plant was explained by means of an excellent vertical section model and provided an opportunity to illustrate how the engineer had overcome the necessary but slow process of removing sludge

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(suspended sand, soil, etc.) deposited on the surface of the filter beds during filtration by reversing the flow of water and so lifting the sludge from the filter bed and forcing it over the overflow. This relatively modern method of renewing the efficiency of a filter bed was sharply contrasted by observing the physical labour necessary in skimming sludge and loosening up the sand and gravel of the older type of gravity beds. Despite the use of percussion tools the filter bed was necessarily out of commission during the period of renewal, whereas in the rapid filtration plant the removal of sludge and reconditioning of the filter beds was accomplished in a few minutes by the simple process, controlled by a hand wheel, of reversing the flow of water.

The use of minerals, aluminium sulphate and activated carbon and the chemical chlorine was explained, and it became obvious that the combination of mechanical and chemical purification of the water enabled the Water Engineer to deal confidently with known or suspected sources of water pollution that would render the piped water unfit for human use or consumption.

Our attention was then directed to the necessity of pumping the water to the consumer, and in the engine house we were shown many examples of motive power ranging from the steam and gas engine (not now in use) to the heavy oil (diesel) engine and electric motor; also the self-contained electrical generating set available in the event of breakdown in the grid system. The boys were at this stage permitted to look over the various types of engine and within reason to walk round the engine house as they desired; the ready response of the operatives to the many questions posed to them and the eager acceptance of the opportunity to be among

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moving machinery made Mr. Brown's gesture appreciated.

Linking the past and present with the future we were taken into the Board Room (the undertaking being a limited company) and there shown the model of the new water tower in course of erection on Siward's Howe at Heslington on the eastern boundary of York. Mr. Brown told us of the need to keep ahead of public requirements, and emphasised the Company's desire to build a water tower that would not clash with a rural landscape that contained among other buildings, Heslington Hall. As a result of consultation between the company, the architect, and the ministry and societies interested in the preservation of rural values, a project reminiscent of mediaeval architecture was agreed upon and so far as we could judge from the model and landscape drawings, would enhance rather than detract from what was a wooded promontory.

Our visit closed with thanks being expressed to Mr. Brown for a well planned and much appreciated visit.

A letter of thanks was forwarded to Mr. Dunkerley, Water Works Engineer, by one of the boys.

TAYLORS LTD., LAYERTHORPE 2.11.54. 1.30-4.45 p.m.  
*Nature of Business*

Fabrication of Components (Crane jibs, Excavator Bases and Buckets, Dragline Buckets) for Public Works Contractors at home and abroad.

The works, consisting of three scattered workshops situate between the York Electricity Generating Station and the Gas Works on the east side of York and within one mile of the City centre, is an example of the small



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(40-50 employees) engineering works engaged in a specialised branch of the industry, metal manipulation.

We were received by the Works Manager, and it was obvious from his initial remarks that despite the scattered nature of the workshops, experience, time and thought had done much to overcome this difficulty and its possible result on costs.

It was pleasing to find our stress laid on the importance of workshop drawing supported by actual practice, as, before starting on our tour of the works we were shown examples of complete drawings from which 'breakdown' drawings of component or structural sections were made for use in the workshops, the Works Manager stressing the importance of an operative's ability to read a drawing.

To facilitate control the party was divided into two sections and so progressed in a comfortable manner through the following departments and shops:

*Engineering Stores.* The system of storage, issue and stock control was explained and the necessity of orderly storage was very apparent as without a satisfactory system of receipt and issue the progress of work through the shops would be seriously impeded.

*Metal Stores and Profile-Cutting Shop.* Sited away from the General Engineering Workshop and equipped with ramps, overhead fitting hoists, Oxyacetylene cutting machines and power saws. All metals (sheets, angles and bars) are received and stored in this department, which was a good example of the modern method of taking the various cutting machines to the store, so reducing repeated handling of materials. We saw the ease with which heavy quantities of metal were lifted by means of overhead cranes and gantries; the cutting

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of sheet metal to the various shapes by means of the oxyacetylene cutting flame which followed the shape set by a pre-formed templet, and the rapid sawing to length of bars, channels and angles on the power hack saw.

*Machine Shop.* Situate some 300 yards away from the main works and containing centre lathes, turret lathes, drilling and milling machines. The jobs were being worked to fine limits, necessitating the use of micrometer and viewer gauges.

*Erecting Shops.* It was in this shop that we saw the components previously seen in the engineering and metal stores and the machine shop, being built into the firm's products. Assembly was facilitated by revolvable jigs and we had the opportunity of watching the tacking together of the various parts, afterwards followed by full welding. Conveniently situated about the shop were drilling machines of various types (radial arm and pedestal) and this enabled us to see the ease with which holes up to 3-in. diameter were drilled. Adjacent was the small blacksmith's shop with forge, gas reverberatory furnaces, a pneumatic hammer, and where the specialised work of automobile spring making and resetting was undertaken in addition to wrought ironwork and general blacksmithing. A well-planned tour of the works was much appreciated by the boys. Thanks were personally expressed and a letter of thanks forwarded to the firm by one of the boys.

This was typical of visits made throughout the year to Messrs. Rowntree's Engineering plant, to Adams Hydraulics, British Railways, the West Yorkshire Road Car Company's garage, Shepherd and Son's Workshops, the Sheppee Engineering Company's works,

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Wray's brickyard, the R.E.M.E. Workshops at Fulford Barracks, Cooke, Troughton and Sims, instrument maker's shops, Ben Johnson's printing works and the Ebor Woodworking Company. The notes made by the teacher and quoted above serve as examples of observation. The boys write letters of thanks singling out for special mention some part of the work that especially interested them.

Experience, observation, report, practical help are exemplified in visits by the fourth-year girls to Child Welfare Clinics and Day Nurseries. After an introductory talk given by the doctor at the central Welfare Clinic the girls helped nurses and voluntary workers at general clinics on specified days. Incidental visits to hospitals and old people's homes to sing carols and take gifts have been enjoyed each year. One of the most rewarding visits is always that paid to the Yorkshire School for the Blind. Some of their children came in turn to our Open Day as very welcome guests.

Cookery demonstrations at Electricity and Gas Board showrooms and mannequin parades, art gallery pictures and Art School needlework, dress design and sculpture have enlarged or underlined our school experience. Weavers have been to the textile department at Leeds University and to Black Dyke Mills.

We have encouraged school visits to worthwhile films, plays given by visiting companies, such as the Young Vic and the Norther Children's Theatre or by neighbouring schools, ballet and introduction to the orchestral concerts, now unhappily rarely given.

Local exhibitions of Clean Food, Child Art and School Savings have been supported by drawings, paintings and posters and conducted parties have gone



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to see them. During the York Festival the section organised by York schools was a source of profit and pleasure. We gave much and learnt much.

'Out-of-doors School', said the first quoted passage in this chapter. I end it by testifying to the energy, resource and understanding of my teachers who have used a valuable teaching aid so intelligently.

## IX

### SELF HELP

SMALL TOWNS with their own education authority have the chance of combining personal relationships with very necessary control to a degree not physically possible in large areas. The result is a special concern for and understanding of each school's ways and needs. We all seek freedom in which to develop. Where there is trust between teachers and children and between school and local authority progress in all directions is immediately possible. Herein lies the opportunity for secondary modern schools not compulsorily hedged in by examination requirements. The sight of freedom is too much for too many of us. We turn back from the challenge of uncharted ways to the known routine of examination syllabuses and tests.

The most important kind of self-help that we can be responsible for is the creation of methods of teaching and schemes of work suited to the children in our schools. These merit chapters for themselves. Here we will consider practical problems that we felt we ought to solve for ourselves rather than ask the authority to make additional provision for us.

First we must note important ancillary services. Milk and meals are provided for those who require them and we supervise the children in their classrooms and in the school canteen. We have a medical room. The school

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nurse attends twice a week to deal with minor complaints, despatching those that require closer examination to the school clinic. She checks the cleanliness of the children's heads and assists when the doctors come to examine all children before they leave. The eye and dental clinics by giving attention and advice to those requiring it help us considerably. Deaf children and those with speech defects have every attention. Our physical education organisers teach children with flat feet, exercises that should benefit them.

Backwardness and emotional disturbance is dealt with by the Child Guidance Clinic, whose diagnosis and follow up of cases strongly support our work. The Probation Officer and the Children's Officer keep in touch with us over difficulties affecting children and homes. Sometimes it seems that the whole week is taken up with problems in which the help of one or other of these services is invaluable. It can be a relief to turn to the work of the major part of the school. Let us see what we have done for ourselves.

We were given a splendid stage and an excellent room for a library, but lacked the means of equipping them. In various ways we built up our School Fund and Dramatic Society Fund until we were able to add the books and settings so sorely needed. Although we had no capital grant to start us off and thereafter for some years our grant was £15 a year, we soon had over one thousand books on our shelves. School concerts and plays and Parent-Teacher efforts provided the money with which we bought carefully, often at second hand.

We were working at the same time to light and clothe our stage. Our first plays were enjoyably primitive, the whole set having to be changed in full view of the



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audience, and the art of getting players on and off the stage appropriately in various situations requiring much ingenuity. Our lighting battens were made in our metal-work shop. A parent and his friend came in to help us with the lighting. As funds grew we could do more wiring, make floods, buy second-hand dimmers, construct our lighting set and fix it on the wall at the side of the stage where it was safe. Each year we build a platform so that our lighting expert is above the players waiting to go on and can see the effect of his changes.

We bought timber beams to go across the top of the stage. To them we were able to attach the flats which we made in the woodwork room. We built enough flats to encase our stage, using a roll of canvas in the process. The flats were light enough to move and turn easily for changes of set. Slung from above, anchored by sand bags, they could be changed round between scenes in little over five minutes. Sizing and painting was done by the Art teacher with children to help.

Later we bought curtains: first the large velvet curtains to draw across the front of the stage, which gave us an apron stage and made scene changes private and expeditious, to the deep regret of many parents who enjoyed our stage hands working without cover; and then the complete set of curtains in Bolton sheeting with pelmets and traverses. This saves us hours of time in preparing flats and makes it possible to elaborate our stage properties. We have made our own costumes and latterly our own music scripts. We have curtained staff rooms to make them less bare. A recent result of dramatic society initiative is that we have bought a tape recorder.

We decided to buy a printing press to further the

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connection between the library and the bookcraft room, where already many of our books were having first aid. Our reward was to see a first booklet of children's verse printed and bound by other children.

Self help has always been the natural order in the science laboratory, where the master in charge has over the years made much of his own equipment, models and slides to illustrate his lessons. It is instructive to see a home-made lantern costing less than a pound throw a better picture the length of the room than a modern episcopo worth nearly one hundred pounds.

The authority provided us with some pictures, but we have bought others by our own efforts.

Our first major outdoor effort was to make and assemble a garden hut. Form 3A boys working with their woodwork master made it large enough to take all our gardening tools at one end and at the other side of the partition there was ample room for the park superintendent's men to keep the motor cutter and their own tools. It was set on brick with a concrete foundation. Painted and cared for it has stood the tests of usefulness and time.

Hurdles were made for athletics training and then as the river is only two miles away a canoe was built. Each summer holiday since then boys have used it without mishap, going several miles up river and camping in fair weather.

School pets have been acquired as enthusiasms rise and we have built cages or hutches for golden hamsters, guinea pigs and rabbits. A group of fourth-year 'D' stream boys working with the gardening master dug out and concreted a garden pool to which fish and other creatures, insects and plants are being introduced.

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A very ambitious plan has finally been worked out in the construction of a greenhouse. Working with the gardening master boys laid the concrete base. A parent came in to make sure the brickwork was neatly done and then the woodwork master with chosen boys made the framework and did the glazing.

Photographic slides and a lantern screen have been made for the geography room and presently a Stevenson screen is to be added to our out-door equipment.

The value of much of our self-help is that it is a shared effort between pupils and staff for a known and proved reason. Naturally the staff provide the important direction and much of the work, but it is good for boys to be sharers in such labour. Even such down to earth provision as shoe scrapers made in the metalwork room and fixed in concrete at the ends of the building where children would otherwise carry mud into the school from the playing fields, win more approval because we made them ourselves.



## X

### CLUBS AND SOCIETIES

'IF YOU WANT TO KNOW the difference between grammar and other kinds of schools you have only to see what happens at four o'clock any afternoon. Within five minutes the other schools are empty, while in the grammar schools many games and club activities are about to begin.' This point of view thus forcibly put nearly ten years ago by one not especially friendly towards the new secondary schools may have had justification enough before the war. There is reason to believe it would be a most unfair judgment to-day.

Even before the war societies doing first rate work but attracting little attention existed in many senior schools where teachers were keen and resolute. They needed to be resolute to break down the opposition of many parents to the idea of pupils remaining at school after four o'clock. There was a suspicion that they were being 'kept in' and resentment engendered in an earlier age of schooling boiled over at the thought. Even yet some parents regard the extra half hour or hour with reserve. Then, too, many children from senior schools had home or outside duties, such as caring for younger children until the parents returned from work or delivering papers or groceries. These they have in greater measure to-day so that rehearsals of plays are

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often interrupted and even school games are accounted of less importance than wage-earning jobs at fourteen.

Coaching in athletics and games goes on and societies continue to develop after school hours in most secondary schools to-day. The influence of the teacher is essential. Direction here, as in all work undertaken during the day, makes the activity doubly enjoyable or valuable. The recreational needs of lively and energetic children are not met without effort. The effort required at the end of a hard and continuous day's teaching has to be experienced to be believed. Where teachers are willing to make it, both children and school are fortunate. Relationships established outside the classroom have their own special worth, but they add immeasurably to the spirit prevailing within the school.

Public schools had a natural need to develop clubs and societies for boys and girls who lived in them all the term. They were outlets for animal spirits. They widened cultural experience. The boy could sometimes instruct his teacher, a truly educational result. The pedestal was wisely neglected. Day grammar schools accepted the prefect system and out of school activities as educational examples to be copied. They modified and adapted and succeeded so well that boys and girls trained in grammar school ways were prepared to see what could be done in turn in the secondary modern schools in which they had chosen to teach. They worked at a different level, no less hard, no less eagerly. The principles were the same, the method perhaps different, the need much greater. They were often working for children who had no advantages and often no awareness that anything extra was being offered them. Rewards and recognition were generally confined to

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their own knowledge that they were living up to teaching standards that they had set themselves.

This school is fortunate in having a staff that, in the main, shares the belief in the value of out of school activities and develops and directs them with a will. School visits and camps have been described. Let us see what else is going on.

House matches are arranged and from observation of them and of practice matches the school teams in the various games are selected. The girls play hockey, netball and rounders in season and the boys association football, rugby and cricket. The boys have senior and intermediate teams in all three sports. Coaching on the field or at the nets is given and matches are played against the staff as well as against other city schools.

Cross-country running is practised in the middle term. The school and city athletics sports days take place in the summer term. Children train for the usual track events. Hurdling standards improve each year and with the field events reveal the importance of correct coaching. The shot, discus and javelin have been introduced to school sports days. Winners score points in the House competition.

Boys and girls play tennis and badminton. The cost of racquets, balls and shuttles limits the numbers of players. The school fund can sometimes afford to be generous.

The interested boy or girl can find stories about his favourite sport, lives of great players and information about the conduct of the game, in the school library. They are clearly labelled and are in great demand.

Clubs depend on the enthusiasm of their members. One group met in the library each week for talks. We



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heard talks about Somerset Maugham, Enid Blyton and Zane Grey. We discussed favourite authors. There were papers on *Bunkle* and *Jennings* or *Martin Rattler* and *Lorna Doone*. Members of staff remembered their childhood reading. But the club languished and was not taken up the next year. It is being revived this year.

For a while there was an ardent Pets' Club. Speakers were eager to bring their pets and almost every talk was illustrated except those where the subject was too large to introduce to the classroom. The list became quite impressive. Pigeons, tortoises, puppies, monkeys, hens, goldfish, golden hamsters (kept in the classroom and carried home each week-end), cats, tropical fish (brought in a thermos flask), ducks, canaries, hedgehogs, squirrels, dogs, cage birds, goats, reptiles, mice, bees and horses were displayed, or in the case of goats, monkeys and horses, discussed. We had a rabbit show. Chinchilla, Dutch, Rex and English types were brought. We keep school rabbits too. Then we found that enough children had tortoises to merit having a tortoise show. The children took *Animal Ways* and found books on their pets in the school library. The teacher who nourished and subscribed to the children's interest left. The club vanished. Now it is being taken up again years later and this is the report read to the school by a first-year boy.

### THE PETS' CLUB

'The pets club was started only late this term. At present the membership is limited to first-year pupils. Next term we propose to welcome second-year scholars.

'John Atkinson gave the first talk and chose for his subject the guinea pig. Keith Coffee brought his guinea

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pig and we enjoyed listening to John and Keith discussing these animals. The next talk was given by Rodney Lancaster, who spoke about pet birds. We could not have a bird to see as it was a dull day and cold. It would have been unwise to bring one to brave the weather. Next, with the aid of my brothers and my own rabbit, I told many interesting facts about these popular pets, and the meeting asked questions and discussed relevant points.

'If we have such interesting talkers next term the pets' club will certainly flourish. We thank Miss Boggon for giving up her spare time to run the Pets' Club and Mr. Kneebone for allowing us to bring our pets along.

'In our form room there is a female and a male hamster. We have got more than 50 people down for babies.'

The last sentence of the report sent the school laughing to enjoy the Christmas holiday.

Girls do not normally take bookcraft, but they may join the boys in the society that meets on Tuesday afternoons, and several do. They make calendars and learn to prepare simple bindings for magazines and papers.

The Natural History Society attracts a number of lively youngsters. Here is the most recent report given by a girl:

'This has been a very successful term. Meetings have been well attended, though some of our keenest members have often had to be absent in order to take part in various rehearsals.

'A pleasing feature has been the talks given by members—Alan Brown on "Earwigs", Keith Coffee on "Moths", Derek Minton on "Things seen at Belle Vue

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Zoo" and Frank Heald on "Beavers". These talks were well prepared and were illustrated by drawing, picture or specimen. No less interesting than the talks themselves were the discussions that followed them. We have some similar talks arranged for next term.

'The most interesting event this year has been the premature hatching out of the Red Admiral butterfly found and fed by Keith Watson of 1D. As the weather seemed unsuitable for releasing the butterfly we kept it in a box and fed it on sugar and water. It became very tame and was always asking for more sugar, by uncoiling its long tongue. We kept it alive in this way for nearly a month. Though it never knew freedom it fed as a butterfly never fed before.'

A summary of a previous year's work carried on on Thursday afternoons and at lunch-time will indicate what the young beginner may learn from his meetings.

### NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

#### 1. Lantern talks:

Spiders, hydra, snails, slugs.

Mushrooms and toadstools on filmstrips.

#### 2. Demonstration of techniques:

Collection, pressing, preparing, setting up and maintaining shells, plants, aquaria, moths, beetles, butterflies.

Breeding out butterflies and moths from caterpillars.

#### 3. Talks on biological principles:

The balance of Nature—the web of life.

Man and animals in opposition and co-operation.

The fall of the leaves in autumn.

Different sorts of animals.



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4. Prepared talks by scholars:  
Garden friends and foes—insects, birds, worms.
5. Exhibits—specimens gathered by members:  
Moths, butterflies and beetles.  
Nest of humble bees.  
Local spiders.  
Fossil plants from a coal mine.  
Ichneumon flies.  
Pond life, large and microscopic.  
Flowering plants.  
Fungi.
6. Astronomy:  
Talks, discussion and preparation of charts in winter months.  
Sunspots, sun, moon and stars, constellations.
7. Recording:  
Birds, plants, moths and butterflies of the neighbourhood.  
Other objects and happenings of interest.
8. Making apparatus:  
Breeding cages for caterpillars, nets for collecting pond life.  
Setting boards for butterflies.
9. Keeping and feeding spiders, fish.

Girls and boys share Art Club meetings, where they are allowed as far as practicable to follow the art form that appeals to them most. Some of their work is mentioned in this report:

‘The Art Club has had many meetings this term. Although the club is quite new we have well over 30 members at a full attendance, and though we would

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like to have more we find that this is impossible as we should be cramped for room.

'Many people have taken different view points on Art and are weaving, making models and doing work on the scraper board. The scraper board work at the moment is the centre of attraction and we have many keen members doing this. Weaving is another centre of interest. Girls are making slippers, scarves, cushion covers and many other useful articles.

'Others who are model-making are successful too. They are making clay and plaster of paris models. There are cloth and pipe cleaner models being made for the toy stages by another group.'

Our Musical Society has grown, despite several staff changes, into a very enthusiastic group. There are really three groups: the recorder players, the junior choir and the senior choir. Usually they appear before parents and school for our carol service and on Open Day, and a smaller choir drawn from them joins other schools in the annual Music Festival. This year they combined with the Dramatic Society to produce our first operetta. The music was adapted and composed by our music master and the script and lyrics written by the two producers. Hitherto each year we have retold stories from the operas and ballet, from *The Blue Bird* and *The Arabian Nights*, from Chaucer and Nativity stories. We have employed colour, dancing and singing to support the story. This year we used a chorus of seventy boys and girls and found soloists who could command attention and win delight from their audiences. Our orchestra was the two school pianos.

Rehearsals became more feverish as the operetta

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grew in all directions, proving difficult to manage and finally finding its shape. Original drama we have had before. This is the first time we have made an operetta. It defied exact production. It came natural and fresh to the stage as the producers fell back exhausted. There was all the virtue in it of staff and children having made something new together.

Other societies that perish and renew themselves are the Stamp Club, the Railway Society and the Cycling Club. There is an unofficial indoor club playing draughts, chess, lexicon and other games that help to pass wet lunch hours. The science laboratory is the meeting-place and a good standard of quietness is observed.

At home children follow their own bent. We suggest leisure-hour work or reading that they might do. We arrange to exhibit their models, collections and drawings and invite parents to come to see what can be done by other children. We have Scouts, Guides, St. John Ambulance Cadets and older children already attending Youth Clubs. On occasion, such as 'Remembering Day' children come to school in their uniforms and we applaud the interest they are showing in their organisations. We seek books, pamphlets, and magazines for the library to add to their enjoyment of their hobby or interest. Arthur Hugh Clough's lines have a new significance:

For not by eastern windows only  
When morning comes, comes in the light.

All means can be educational means and if enjoyment accompanies them, so much the better.

Before our children leave school the Youth Organiser



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talks to them about the Youth Club activities in the neighbourhood and invites them to engage mind and body in worthwhile pursuits. Preparation for industry is incidental. We educate first as far as we can. Preparation for Youth Clubs is in a sense begun incidentally in our school clubs and societies. It has been seen by us that the means and the end can be good alike.

## XI

### OPEN DAYS

SPEECH DAY is a familiar grammar school occasion. Usually the reports given by Heads of schools are of immense educational interest and quality, focussing attention on a community of five or six hundred children and making intelligent comment on the results achieved in work and games. In my own day that was as near as any parent penetrated to the work of the school. On taking over a secondary modern school I felt that we should combine the report on school life with a near view of what the school was doing. Parents were accordingly asked to visit the form rooms and practical rooms first, to get at least an impression of the work that was being undertaken. Then later they were brought together into the school hall for the presentation of prizes and short speeches.

Plans were prepared showing the layout of all rooms and senior pupils were available as guides, very willing to talk on something that they know so much about. Parents felt at ease and enjoyed the unconscious insight offered into school life as boys and girls chattered informatively about rooms, work and personalities.

We have tried to direct parents as much to classrooms to see work in exercise books or folders as to practical rooms where displays of work done could be arranged brightly and attractively. Some earnest mothers do

## OPEN DAYS

settle down to serious discussion with form teachers, but the majority naturally make for the Art and Craft rooms. All see their children with their fellows, with their teachers, doing work of which they are truly capable. There is no pretence. Parents see us as we are.

There can be two results from this. They are either dismayed at the low standard reached by their child and ask the reason for it if they do not already know, or else they are pleased with the quality of the work and are happy to praise a school that can produce it. We aim to produce the second result, but if the first is met no harm can come from it. The problem is clearer and there is more possibility of co-operation from the home. In fact the more that is known of good or bad work, the more honest can be the recognition of the remedy. Bad work may be due to poor teaching. It seldom is. More often than not it is the result of dullness or indifference, neither capable of an easy solution. Good work, the result of good effort, is happily the more general rule and the evidence is there for all but the occasionally jaundiced visitor to see.

Parents have had the opportunity of discussing work and ways with teachers at parent-teacher meetings. The disadvantage of having a class to look after while a parent seeks to discover something is obvious enough. The value of the moment or two that can be spent is that the situation is real and not contrived. It can be followed up. The parent can come again at a more convenient time for more detailed study without embarrassment to anyone. Parents who like to see their children in the infant or junior school class that they have heard so much about should carry their interest on to secondary school days. There is nothing like



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personal meetings for making problems possible of solution, whether of parents, children or teachers, and for supplying incentives.

Our school hall is not large enough to hold all our children and all the parents who wish to attend Open Day. The prize-giving and speeches are of less importance than the sight of the school displaying work recently finished or doing its lessons. But there is a place for prizes and reports and we accommodate all we can. The school choir sings its songs, the chairman of the school governors asks for the headmaster's report—and we face a traditional speech day?

I have sought to avoid that. One way has been to put on paper the bare bones of the usual kind of report and run off copies on the school duplicator for each parent. They can take it home and study it at their leisure. They are less likely to forget it than at one hearing. I was very anxious one year to concentrate attention on adolescence and leaving school. I could give ten minutes to that without feeling that the rest of the school activities had been overlooked. These were the notes they read:

### OPEN DAY REPORT

The following lists include visits, studies, games and general activities undertaken since last Open Day in addition to normal school work.

#### *School Visits*

##### 1. *Recreation and Study*

Northern Children's Theatre production of *The Queen's Beasts* and *The Twelve Days of Christmas*.

*Julius Caesar* and *Romeo and Juliet* films.

Song recital by Miss Campbell.

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York Minster organ recital by Fernando Germani.  
Modern dance display at Mill Mount Grammar School.  
School of Art dress exhibition.  
Two visits to London by fourth-year children.  
Youth Hostel Association week-ends.

### 2. *Work Experience*

Whittaker's Bakery	Rowntree's Cocoa Factory
The School for the Blind	Child Welfare Clinics
York Waterworks	Adams' Hydraulics
Taylor & Son, Layerthorpe	Health Week Exhibition
West Yorkshire Road Car Co.	F. Shepherd & Son

Hunter and Smallpage exhibition  
British Railways Carriage and Wagon Works

### 3. *Castle Museum Studies*

'The Living Past' for the York Festival, 1954  
York Woollen Industry      Costume and Crafts  
Arms and Weapons      Pre-historic Yorkshire  
Homes in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries  
Agriculture      Shipping      Water Transport

### *Visitors*

30 Leeds University students.  
30 City of Leeds Training College students.  
Teaching practice students from St. John's College,  
York.  
Reading University.  
Leeds University.  
Mrs. Abbey demonstrating lace-making.  
York Settlement Group.  
Yorkshire School Library Association.  
German and Austrian headmasters.  
Herring Board demonstrator.

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Acomb Townswomen's Guild.

Acomb County Primary School Class.

### *Parent-Teacher Association*

Garden Party and Sports Day.

First-year parents' meeting.

Annual General Meeting.

P.T.A. Committee meetings.

Beckfield-Carr Joint P.-T.A. meeting.

Leisure Hour Work Display and 'Any Questions' Panel.

### *Clubs and Societies*

Association Football, Senior and Intermediate.

Rugby Football, Senior and Intermediate.

Hockey. Cricket, Senior and Intermediate.

Netball. Athletics.

Badminton. Bookcraft.

Choir. Stamps.

Recorders. Rabbits.

Drama. Natural History.

On another occasion letters to the press and press comment had been seriously adrift about the teaching of the three R's in junior and secondary modern schools. I sought to make my approach simple, topical and direct. The broadsheets distributed to each parent suggested by implication that we knew our A B Cs and gave general information about our school year. This was it:

#### A. *New Staff:*

Five new members.

#### B. *Size of School:*

Summer 1953 - 504

Autumn 1953 - 583

Spring 1954 - 554



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### C. *Grammar School Transfers:*

Five children were transferred to grammar schools in September, 1953.

### D. *Further Education:*

Last school year 48 children sought to go on to the School of Commerce, the School of Art, and Engineering and Building courses at the Technical School. 36 succeeded. This year 35 have applied. Results are awaited.

### E. *Educational Visits:*

Two Northern Theatre productions:

(a) *The Little Dragon*: attended by 216 children.

(b) *The Queen's Beasts*: attended by 309 children.

Bournville educational films: Form 3B.

Hunter & Smallpage's modern furniture exhibition: 4th-year forms.

London: 28 4th-year children to see the Houses of Parliament and other important places.

Films: *Everest* and *This is York*.

Youth Hostel Association: Clifton twice and Malton. Mrs. Rowntree and Mr. Key on 'Youth Hostels'.

The School Captain received her Coronation souvenir from the Lord Mayor in the Assembly Rooms.

Whittaker's Bakery: 4th-year girls.

Social study visits to heads of departments in the City.

Administration and to Gas, Water and Electricity Companies.

### F. *Visitors:*

'With Shackleton to the Antarctic' by Mr. Green (Hull).

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Miss Fisher, lately Matron of City General Hospital, presented with brooch on leaving York.

Acomb County Primary Class to see our Weaving.

St. John's College students on teaching practice each term.

Herring cookery exhibition.

49 Leeds University students to study organisation of the school in two visits.

Mr. Roberts, Youth Club Organiser, spoke to leavers on 'Youth Club facilities in York'.

Mr. Minter brought five visitors from Israel and Uruguay.

Mr. Oldman brought Indian and African Colonial students.

Acomb Townswomen's Guild representatives.

### G. *Castle Museum Visits:*

2nd year: Roman York and Prehistoric remains.  
Agriculture and Transport.

3rd year: Transport—Ships.

4th year: Domestic Architecture from early to modern times. Costume and Crafts.

### H. *Music:*

Choir to Music Festival last May.

Carol Service, December, 1953.

Major Bavin's music lecture for 1st and 2nd years.

Group to hear Elsie Suddaby and Alan Wicks recital at the Centenary Chapel.

Song recitals at school by Miss Campbell and Mr. John Robertson.

### I. *Drama:*

School Drama Festival. Each form presents a play during the spring term.

'Foursome'—three short plays and a passage of

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verse speaking presented before parents in November, 1953.

J. *United Nations Week, October, 1953:*

The Rev. D. Oxby Parker, Rev. R. C. Wilkins, Rev. T. Bayles Naylor, Rev. F. Onyett and several parents joined us at morning prayers. Mr. Lewis Waddilove spoke to the school on his visit to further Quaker relief in Korea.

K. *Parent-Teacher Association:*

Superintendent Carter addressed the joint Beckfield-Carr P.T.A. on the 'Work of the Police Force'. Staff-Parents Cricket XI games.

New parents: 72 present.

Annual General Meeting.

Information poster concerning activities and help given to school.

St. Lawrence Male Voice Choir visit.

Leisure Hour Work display.

Lecture by Miss Wright, illustrated by Mr. Hill of Castle Museum, on 'York'.

Generous support during plays and carol service.

Refreshment Committee helped Christmas parties.

Numerous committee meetings.

L. *Athletics and Games:*

The girls won the York Schools' Shield for Athletics for the second year and also carried off the Hockey Trophy again.

The boys were fourth in the Athletics events.

One boy played in the City boys' team.

*Games played at school:*

GIRLS—Hockey, Netball, Rounders.

BOYS—Association and Rugby football for senior and intermediate teams, Boxing, Softball,



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Cricket for senior and intermediate sides,  
Cross-country running.

Many play Tennis, and the 3rd and 4th years  
play Badminton.

### M. *Clubs and Societies:*

Reports on the following clubs or societies have  
been given during the year. All function after school.  
Senior and Junior Choir, Recorders, Natural His-  
tory, Bookcraft, Drama, Stamps, Canoe, Cycling,  
Library, Pets.

### N. *The School Library:*

The library has been developed through the Au-  
thority's grant, Parent-Teacher generosity, School  
funds, gifts from children and friends and from  
salvage, until we now have nearly 2,000 books  
available for the children to borrow or to use in  
research training.

### O. *Christmas Parties:*

1st, 2nd and 4th years in Canteen and Hall.

2A, 2B and 2C in form rooms.

Prefects tea with Staff.

### P. *The School Medical Service* has been constantly avail- able to all children throughout the year. 77 chil- dren were treated for minor ailments, making 285 attendances. 200 were medically examined and 100 attended mass X-ray.

### Q. *The Youth Employment Officers* gave preliminary talks and interviews each term. Parents came to the final interviews in good numbers.

### R. *Gifts* have been made to:

Fairfield Sanatorium and to Children's Nurseries  
in York with the proceeds of our Carol Service  
collection.

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S. *Meals Served in School Canteen:*

39,005.

T. *Milk Consumed during 1953:*

62,100 bottles, each containing one-third of a pint.

U. *York Civic Trust:*

The school has assumed full membership because it is so proud of the city of York.

V. *School Uniform:*

148 girls and 59 boys have adopted the School uniform. It is hoped that many others will be encouraged to follow suit.

W. *Television:*

143 children come from homes that possess TV sets. A year ago there were 79.

X. *Music Festival:*

The York Schools' Music Festival is to be held in the Salvation Army Hall, Clarence Street, on 25th and 26th May. A Beckfield choir will be taking part.

Y. *Sports Day:*

Parents are asked to keep 2nd June clear.

Z. *Garden Party:*

Given good support it is proposed to run a Parent-Teacher Garden Party one Saturday in June. Dates of meetings in preparation for the party will be sent to all parents.

I was then able to refer to the school year very briefly and was free to explain in some detail just what we did in reading, writing and arithmetic, paying a well deserved tribute to the nearby junior schools for sending us virtually no non-readers in the past year.

I have made use of school captains and senior pupils when there have been reports that could be given by

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them. Our own children enjoy variety of approach and it is likely that parents do so too. Our most ambitious effort was to combine staff reports with pupil readings. I had asked in a staff meeting for an exchange of information so that members would know what their colleagues were doing. I prevailed upon each teacher to give a three-minute outline of his work and very impressive was the total effect. I liked it so much that I persuaded each teacher to give me a short statement and with two girls and a boy from the fourth year to help me, I read them to our parents and governors on Open Day. There was too much to take in, but I was satisfied that a fair picture of our teaching target had been set out before an audience intrigued by the method of presentation.

My introduction said: 'The reports are cut fine. They say little of teacher-pupil relationship, the rich or poor ground from which our knowledge springs or languishes. I can merely affirm as the most vital introduction to these reports that individual freedom is respected and encouraged to express itself through partnership and service, that religious truths are taught and, as far as humanly possible, followed, and that the highest standards of work are sought.' Then we went on to read in turn such reports as these:

### I. METALWORK

Whilst it is acknowledged that woodwork has had its place in the syllabus of the York schools since the beginning of the century, it was not until the early thirties that Metalwork as a subject was introduced into the York elementary schools. Since that time good progress has been made and we are greatly indebted to the



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Education Authority for the provision of metalwork rooms admirably equipped with facilities for the pursuance of the several branches of the craft: benchwork, sheet metalwork, turning and smithing.

It is not the aim of metalcrafts to teach a boy a trade. Indeed, when one realises that at the most a boy spends only the equivalent of six working weeks in the metalwork room during his school career, the impossibility of learning in that highly skilled trade is appreciated. Why then is metalwork taught as a subject?

It is to enable balance to be given to the development of the pupil through training the hand, mind and eye to work together in the production of articles useful in purpose and pleasing to the user. How is this accomplished? By the class at first working together, and by diligent endeavour in mastering the simpler processes of hand and machine practice; then being slowly weaned from dependence on the teacher to the bolder status of a worker in a communal workshop. It has often been asked, how does the less intelligent boy (judged by academic standards) progress within the scheme of workshop practice? Experience shows that while the 'C' and 'D' boy is slower to learn there is ultimately little difference between the best of the 'A' boys and the best of the 'Cs' or 'Ds'. To appreciate the significance of this it must be remembered that the majority of our boys will earn their livelihood by working as craftsmen.

## 2. ENGLISH

The work in English has two main aims, one cultural, the other utilitarian.

An attempt is made to arouse a love of books and to widen and deepen the childrens' capacity for enjoyment.

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A wide variety of well-chosen books is provided for silent reading in spare moments, and selected class novels are more closely studied. Self confidence and clarity of speech are improved by practice in short speeches and by class discussion of topics of interest. Older children find keen enjoyment in debates, and occasionally they give lectures on subjects which appeal to them. This calls for research, and the use of the library, and for the collection of illustrative material. Further, to encourage a love of the spoken word, a verse-speaking group has been formed.

There is a regular reading of plays, and each form prepares and presents a class play. In some cases this play is spontaneous and improvised. Subjects are chosen after class discussion and the dialogue written by the children themselves. In time even the shyest child will speak his thoughts aloud. The exercise develops the creative imagination.

In written English the aim is to guide the children in expressing themselves suitably, accurately and persuasively. Imaginative work, descriptive work, and exercises based upon everyday life and experience are given. With older children there is a greater freedom in choice of subject. They are encouraged to write at length on the subject of their choice, to use drawings to illustrate their work, and thus to compose their own book. Interesting variations in written English have included 'Wonbee Island', '4C Village', and several form newspapers and magazines.

## 3. HISTORY

One of the most important factors in our history has been that we live on an island. Trade and industry have

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brought us great wealth, the standard of our agriculture is high and our particular form of democratic government is peculiarly our own. The development of these various aspects of our daily life has been used as the basis of our studies in history.

In the first year, ships, trade and voyages of discovery are studied with the object of showing how they helped in the growth of the British Empire.

In the second year, methods of farming and the gradual development of the crafts which form the basis of our major industries are traced from the Neolithic Age to modern times.

The third year studies the growth of our form of democratic government both in Parliament and the City Council. A small number of children visit London to see where the most important events took place.

The fourth year concentrates on the current events as they take place day by day and an attempt is made to discover why they happen and what their consequences may be.

### 4. SOCIAL HISTORY

From the second year onwards an attempt is being made to link the ordinary history course with the social life and development of our own city, York. Its military history is linked with that of the Roman occupation, the Norman garrison and the mediaeval outpost against the Scots; the religious study with the Minster and monasteries: commercial life with the Craft Guilds and the Railway museum, and the farming district nearby with the Yorkshire Agricultural Show.

In the third year the work of the City Council is studied, and through the use of books and visits research



## OPEN DAYS

work is done on the social services, tracing them from their beginnings to modern times. Each child produces at the end of the year a simple thesis containing written work, maps and illustrations. The enjoyment of the study is due chiefly to the kind and willing help of all the City officials.

The fourth year is devoted to a study of craftsmanship and the personalities associated with our city. This work is carried on with the close co-operation of The Castle Museum Educational Service. In the first term, beginning with a visit to a new housing estate, domestic architecture and all the furniture necessary for comfort are traced through the ages from a study of the actual houses, tables and chairs. Visits are made to the Treasurer's House and to the Mansion House. This term, with the opening of the Debtor's Prison as a museum, an experiment is being worked out. The boys are using the craft rooms, studying the processes used and comparing them with those in use to-day and tracing through the Freeman's Rolls the development of each craft in York. The girls are using the Costumes Display and associating them with real persons who might have worn them and who did in many cases actually visit York. Miss Wright, the Castle Museum lecturer, is helping us and taking a keen interest in our work. We are also indebted to the Public Library and Art Gallery. Our own School Reference Library is in daily use.

We are trying to make the old and the new City of York really mean something to us.

## 5. SCIENCE

Why do we bother to learn anything? One reason is the purely utilitarian one: we hope to be able to make

definite practical use of the knowledge acquired. Another reason is the very human one—sheer curiosity: we just want to know, as a matter of interest. Man has been like that throughout the ages, and the history of science shows that knowledge sought after in the first instance for its own sake, has over and over again proved to be of great practical value later on.

How has scientific knowledge been gained? For centuries speculation alone was considered sufficient. Its results were few, and often grossly inaccurate. Then experiment replaced speculation. At once discovery increased by leaps and bounds. Moreover, accuracy could be ensured. Thus experiment became the basic means of building up scientific knowledge.

What shall we include in our enquiries? Surely the air we breathe and need to keep our fires burning will claim a place in our list. Water, too, is a prime necessity and has many peculiarities that need investigating. Then there are the various natural forces that maintain the world as we know it.

So in school we start. We set ourselves questions about air, water, fire and natural forces. Then by devising and performing suitable experiments we find answers—perhaps partial only—to our queries. In this way a few months' work finds us in possession of a mass of simple facts about these topics. Simple they may be, but it must be borne in mind that these facts puzzled mankind for hundreds of years, and two hundred years ago they were not known.

Since then science has made amazing progress. Nowadays we are surrounded in school, in home and in places of work, by a multitude of appliances and machines which embody scientific principles. To use

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them intelligently and safely we must know something of the underlying principles and work up to the ways in which it is applied. For instance, after studying expansion we note how it is made use of in thermometers, thermostats and other appliances or in technical processes. At other times we proceed in the reverse way. We start with an appliance—an electric bell, say—and try to find out how it works.

Life and living things pose many difficult problems, but some of them lie within our scope, and these we tackle.

As the end of our labours we will not make very expert scientists, but we shall be in a position to understand better the things that are going on around us, whether they are natural or man-made. We shall know something of 'the miracle in a blade of grass' and shall be able to recognise the kinship between the stalactite hanging in an Ingleton Cave and the scale inside the kettle that boils on the hearth at home.

These are new ways of presenting our information, but the traditional report is not entirely discarded. If our parents are very faithful they can attend four Open Days during their child's stay with us. They will receive a report of the school's progress and their attention will be drawn to some special matter that will answer current criticism or set them thinking.

A report given in 1953 concluded with these words:

'In view of the widespread attention being given to illiteracy I had better say that Beckfield is literate. It would be no more than fair to my colleagues in the primary schools in this district to say that rarely does any child reach this school unable to read, and if it does the reason is obvious enough. Here every effort



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is made to encourage reading habits. The authority continues to make more generous provision for the purchase of library books, and gradually with the continued assistance of the Parent Association, a library is growing. Library work is a vital part of grammar school education. It is no less vital here. Research methods calling for self-reliance are in use in history and English periods and encouragement in reading goes on in regular library lessons. You will have noticed the results of such work in Room 11 and in the library, and the first book of our own produced in the book-binding room. This senior work is helped by much determined effort lower down in the school.

'Live problems abound wherever children are gathered together. Educational and social work are becoming almost synonymous terms in school. We are working to the limits of our capabilities in each, trying to deal imaginatively with the educational needs of all children at whatever level they may be and caring always to maintain the friendly atmosphere in which work thrives and develops.

'We aim at a discipline which is fundamentally fair and humane. We make mistakes. We try again as our spirit revives. Our work is always exacting but often rewarding in the most unexpected ways. We continue to receive good and understanding support from parents, the caretaking and canteen staff, organisers, administrators and a whole army of well-wishers and advisers, including our school governors. I have always valued efficiency, but I live by friendship.'

It seems to sum up much of what we feel about Open Days with their healthy display of strong support for a developing school.

## XII

### PARENTS AND TEACHERS

ON THURSDAY, 14th October, 1947, we called our first meeting at an infants' school within our children's home area, as the children were travelling up to two miles to school, and we wanted to make attendance at the parents' meeting as easy as possible. The letter sent to all parents stated that the Youth Employment Officer would speak and answer questions. He did in fact explain the careful work undertaken by his department in obtaining suitable work for children when they left school and he asked parents to co-operate with him in seeing that their children did not take on 'blind-alley' jobs.

The first meeting was encouraging but no more. A second was called in December in another strategically situated infants' school. Here the Deputy Chief Education Officer spoke of the new school that was to be ours and of its place in the city's educational development plan. There was a moderate attendance. Our speaker showed how the local authority must translate into actuality the provisions of various education acts and he illustrated this by referring to the way in which our local authority provided and maintained schools in which every child should have education according to his 'age, aptitude and ability'. The expression was reasonably new in 1948 and each parent saw in it an educational future for his child that appealed to him.

## PARENTS AND TEACHERS

The Education Officer went on to speak of the authority's obligation to help with clothing, assist with transport, provide school meals and a comprehensive health service. Then, with the blue print of the new school spread out on a blackboard before us, he told us of the authority's plans for Beckfield School. We were all in on the start of a new school. There was no difficulty in obtaining volunteers for our first parent-teacher committee. We chose four parents and three teachers, with the headmaster as chairman and members of staff as secretary and treasurer. The chairman of the school governors became our first president.

Our new committee met within a few weeks. While we were discussing the future of the association the following suggestions received general support:

1. Continuation of talks by officers in Education or associated services.
2. Social evenings, e.g., Brains Trust, Twenty Questions, Whist drive, Gramophone recitals.
3. Talks on their special subjects by members of the staff.
4. Demonstration of film strips in use in the school.
5. P.T. display, with a talk by organiser and teachers on objects and methods.
6. Talks by parents on their own jobs and their plans or hopes for their children.
7. Weaving display and talk.

It was approved that meetings should be held about three a term.

The third meeting held on 26th February, 1948, about six months before we entered the new school, and was addressed by the Senior Assistant School Medical Officer. He had an audience of twenty-six adults, seven



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of whom were teachers. After tracing the origin and history of the service, he outlined some of the achievements to date: death rate halved, teeth much improved, average height and weight increased, children much cleaner in person and dress, such diseases as rickets and tuberculosis, once common, now rare. The doctor next spoke of the school medical inspections and described the comprehensive nature of the existing Health service. He linked with his work that of the Child Guidance Clinic dealing with sufferers from nervous disorders and emotional instability, stutterers, sleep walkers and talkers, children with behaviour difficulties and intellectual disorders. He stressed the need for co-operation between parents and teachers.

During question-time enquiries were made about the results and follow up of medical inspections, dust in schools, frequency of immunisation, children wishing to evade P.T. and the advisability of changing for out-door games in winter.

It may not be surprising that the next committee meeting recommended a social evening. Some members of the meeting found themselves, inexperienced and, uninitiated though they might be, committed to running a Whist Drive. Invitations were sent out, cards, tables and prizes arranged, M.C's drawn from parents who knew the routine, and refreshments prepared. Thirty-one tables were required. One hundred and twenty-four players assembled. A profit of nearly eight pounds was shown. Parent and teacher co-operation had never been friendlier. Was this the way a Parent-Teacher Association should develop?

The next committee meeting on 16th February, 1949, brought suggestions for further social evenings, the

formation of a dramatic society and a choral society. Finally it was decided that the next meeting should combine a display of children's Leisure Hour work with a Bring-and-Buy Sale, community singing and individual items. By now the saving grace and convivial content of a cup of tea at our meetings was highly rated. Funds were becoming adequate to meet this need, but it was also decided to devote as generously as possible to school purposes, such as purchasing library books, pictures, curtains and stage lighting, any monies raised by the association's efforts. This decision has meant much to the school. While we were still bare in certain respects, the money raised helped us towards equipment in school and flowers for the garden that continue to delight us seven years afterwards.

To the Parent-Teacher Committee was now added a Refreshment Committee. Parents sent in what they could afford, and, rationing being still in force, the Food Office was asked for an allowance of fat, eggs and sugar for the 150 parents who might come to our Christmas Party. Games and prizes were attended to by a knowledgeable sub-committee and a very merry evening was held. The parents gave a Christmas tree which was used at the party and was later much admired at our school parties, and our canteen was decorated with streamers and coloured lights. There could be no question of the success of our social evenings. Introductions between parents and teachers were painlessly effected and educational and sociable talk came naturally.

The production of school plays occasioned much self-help and first-rate parent co-operation. With the assistance of two parent electricians, members of staff constructed a lighting set consisting initially of two

battens, one of eighteen feet and the other of sixteen, in aluminium, with sixteen 60-watt lamps. To these were added floats, spots and dimmers operated from a switchboard that gave the lighting controller a perch from which he could observe the stage and keep his wiring out of the reach of curious fingers. The system was tested and approved by the electricity board inspector and subsequently checked whenever a temporary stage licence was taken out.

There was a demand for lantern lectures and a willing supply from amateur photographers who had brought back their own records of journeys as near as Whitby or as far as Switzerland and Canada. The 'Aims of Industry' Unit from Selby showed films that had bearing on the careers chosen by our own children, but our meeting coincided with York City's cup replay with Newcastle United at Sunderland and was very poorly attended. Two excellent lantern lectures were given by our Castle Museum friends on 'Tea' and 'York'. We ran these in conjunction with our Leisure Hour evening and had good support for each.

Educational talks continued. An old girl of the school spoke on her nursing career and parents talked of their work in British Railways, Electricity Shops and a Press Office. By 1951 two new schools, an infants' and a junior, had been opened within half a mile of us to serve the new estate built on our doorstep. After consultation the heads of the three schools agreed to call one joint P.-T.A. meeting each year. Well over one thousand parents would be involved. The first meeting was in our school hall, when our Chief Education Officer spoke on 'School and Home'. He saw in our associations a corrective to the misconceptions that



exist of school conditions. The two dangers that might weaken our usefulness he considered to be being over-serious in the analysis of children and over-doing social activity, at the expense of educational matters. We found it easy to concur, as that had been our policy throughout, but the impact of educational talks on our parents was negligible. Just over fifty heard this talk. Succeeding speakers have had small but interested audiences. The only comparatively large audience was for a talk which was in the nature of an entertainment from a favourite speaker on a favourite theme, Yorkshire dialect.

By 1951 there were enough old scholars willing to attend a social evening. Parents undertook to help and soon we had two powerful M.C's and a band. Refreshments were provided for this first dance, which was a stage removed from the normal old scholars' parties that we had held each Christmas after the school parties were over. The dance was well supported and we foresaw a useful future for old scholars' activities, encouraged by a sympathetic Parent-Teacher Association. An Old Scholars' Committee was formed, plans were laid for future events and then economy cuts severed our hopes. The Education Committee found it necessary to make a charge for the use of the school hall and any classrooms used that would sweep away the slender profits we had expected to make. The Old Scholars decided to turn elsewhere, to the Church Hall, which was open to them until midnight, and our influence was weakened. We supported two public dances with over 200 people at each, disliked the general atmosphere in which the school had no longer any part, and withdrew with regret. The autumn and spring<sup>v</sup> terms had full programmes

## PARENTS AND TEACHERS

drawing a limited number of willing parents to the school. We decided to introduce a lively summer meeting, and what better way could there be than by organising a Garden Party. No one had any real experience, but all the committees were assembled and volunteers sought for stall and other attractions. We timed our first open-air event for seven o'clock on 18th June, 1952. The Superintendent of Police opened the proceedings with a witty speech and a happy, busy evening followed. First there was a Children's Fancy Dress Parade held within the wired tennis court so that all could see the dresses. Stalls for groceries, vegetables and flowers, bring and buy, books, handkerchiefs, ice cream and minerals and refreshments were manned and did good business. So did the other attractions—bowling at the cricket stump, football goal-keeping, bagatelle, bran tub, fortune telling, portrait sketching, treasure hunt, Dutch auction and several games of skill or chance that only ceased when the boys and girls gave a physical education display and the school choir sang. The nett total taken surprised us all. In about three hours we had raised nearly £80.

At our next meeting, when the result of our work was made known, there were valuable suggestions concerning relief duties on stalls, allowing time for stall-holders to shop, fixing prices, positioning stalls, a change counter, litter bins, information and lost property tables. The effort had been attended by nearly twelve hundred people and brought us much good will from parents who had been tempted in to school by no other method.

Between social and educational activities a fair balance has been struck. Offers by well-wishers have been accepted. A children's ballet group gave a delightful

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performance and brought in many mothers and daughters to our school. A Male Voice Choir noted locally for its entertainment value quite failed to attract a company. Our annual programme has with some variation followed this pattern for the past three years:

Meeting of first-year parents.

Annual general meeting.

School play.

School carol service.

Talk or lantern lecture.

Leisure Hour work display.

Open Day.

Sports Day.

Joint meeting with Primary Schools P.-T. A.

Garden party.

P.-T.A. cricket team fixtures.

To these this year have been added two book exhibitions, mounted with the good will of local booksellers and viewed by parents and children together.

Parents have come together to raise educational issues from time to time. Once they expressed concern at the delay in beginning to build a second secondary modern school on this side of the city when the facilities offered by our school could not by any juggling with the time-table be made available to the numbers of children crowding our rooms. Again their anxiety for playing field accommodation in the heart of a new estate led them to draft a letter to the City Council which might have had some effect in moving that body to make a subsequent grant of £300 towards equipping a children's playground. But our most important meetings seem still to be those held with new parents at the beginning of the school year.



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We have about 150 children in our four-stream intake each year. To our first meeting a fortnight after the beginning of term come between 80-90 parents. Some are sick at heart that their children have 'failed their scholarship'. It is still that with parents, however hard educationists try to make them accept their euphemisms. Other parents want to know what lies ahead. Another group are content to wonder at the marvellous provision made in new schools and never tire of recounting what accommodation was like not so long ago for the main body of children in our nation's schools.

The first meeting is crucial. There is no place for any but honest statement. If parents have not faced up to the reality of the eleven-plus examination they have to do so now. They are told of possible transfers to grammar schools and the standard to be reached before such transfers are considered. They hear about the curriculum, the games and out-of-school activities, the educational visits, the final year and its opportunity for further education. They size up whether we seem to have the requisite sympathy, ability, personality and determination to help their children and they pose their searching, testing questions that would stretch an Adler's or Jung's powers of explanation or comfort to its limits. We do our straight-forward best to help. We seek to be human with no pedestals to climb back upon or technical terms with which to mystify. This is where co-operation between parent and teacher can be lost or gained. Real teachers with their hearts in their jobs know this and seek by every means and especially by patient, good-humoured listening to make a good beginning. Parents feel they have not wasted their evening if they go home knowing their views are understood and

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the way to school lies open for question, answer and action.

'Parent-Teacher Associations attract the good parents, the ambitious and the anxious parents,' say the critics. 'Teachers do not like or support them fully.' Both points are true and can be met. Once the organisation is there and can be seen to be working, even in a limited way, both parents and teachers are at least conscious of the link between home and school that could and should exist. Here lies the chance of the best educational publicity at the very source, when the problem is real and warm, not anaesthetised in a thesis or a speech-day report.

# XIII

## THE SCHOOL GOVERNORS

TEN YEARS AGO I was introduced to our first governing body. There have been changes since then as councils reconstitute themselves and persons move, but those who have been prepared to act as our school governors have generally been interested and active on our behalf. They have proved friends of the school, bringing to it outside views and appreciation that has benefited us. Several have become personal friends.

The 1944 Education Act empowered authorities to appoint governors for County Secondary Schools. It was practicable to zone our city so that we shared with a neighbouring grammar school the twelve persons who were to work in committee with us. There were to be six representative governors, at least three of whom should be members of the local Education Committee. The other three representative governors were to be appointed by the Education Committee. There were also nominated governors, one each drawn from further or adult education, local employers and a recognised body of employees such as the Trades Council. The governing body was completed by the addition of three co-optative members, one a parent of a child attending either the grammar school or our own, the other two chosen for their known interest in education and in the two schools particularly. At least two women were to



be invited. It was specified that at least one of the representative governors should be a woman.

The twelve governors chosen to serve our schools consisted of ten men and two women. The Chief Education Officer is the Clerk to the Governors, and the head of the grammar school and myself are called to the meetings. After the opening series it was decided that, apart from special meetings, there should be three meetings called each year.

Some schools looked with misgiving on the appointment of a governing body that would be able to look closely at their whole working life. The chairman, a representative governor, would be in close touch with the headmaster over all matters concerning the school. The governors would hear periodical reports on the school's progress, be concerned with appointing or dismissal of staff in some cases, receive full information about organisation and curriculum, finance and equipment and the state of the school premises. It all appeared to be potentially dangerous as opportunities of interfering seemed to exist. We have had no such anxieties.

School governors come to know more than the general public about the conduct of schools. It is well to have a sympathetic, enquiring body who in time can come to speak for us with authority where our words would not be heard. The governors of any school, if they have time and are willing to study our work, can arrive at fair unbiased conclusions that we should not shirk meeting. These can be both helpful and salutary.

We are as sensitive as most schools to the merits and demerits of inspection. We work best when we have no fear of judgment being passed, but there are many sides of school life that grow clearer as we need to justify our

actions. Teaching and administration can be improved by wise sharing of opinion, by taking thought and notice of friendly comment, such as we have often had from our school governors. Governors in small measure represent the world outside the school, the world with which the children are ever more closely linked as they move towards leaving age. Heads and teachers do well to see that barriers of distrust and self-protection do not exist where none are called for.

It follows from what I have said that the reports given at governors' meetings should be informative and frank. We are doing our best. There is no need to be apologetic. This is the work we are doing. These are the standards reached. They surprise you? Then come over to Macedonia and help us. In such a way the governors are faced with the breadth, height and depth of the problem of secondary modern education and one small section of opinion outside school may read alarmist news in the national press without a shudder and may even do something to dispel the general ignorance prevailing.

In our own case I have sought to make them familiar with the effect of the increased numbers of children passing through our school. They know how these heavy classes weaken facilities already existing. We have had only half of the school in our science laboratory and our start in woodwork and metalwork has been delayed to the second year because we cannot cope as efficiently with the numbers now in the school. Equipment was adequate for the numbers considered when the school was built. Now we wait for relief when the bulge has passed. We suggest temporary measures. We discuss them and recommend lines of action to the Education



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Committee. Some are found practicable and we benefit. The report goes back to the governors that with their supporting action something has been done. Educational provision becomes a reality, something that they can see happening.

Staff changes are reported at our meetings and the appointments committee meets some of our applicants. A relationship begins to exist between the governors and the staff. Tributes to teachers are happily frequent, not only for work of exceptional merit, but for holding steady over a long period. Work with fourth-year children, the 14-15 age group, and with slower children can be very wearing. The school governors know this because they hear examples quoted at meetings. Our work is not done to win their appreciation, but it can sometimes be done with better heart because it has been recognised.

If safeguard were necessary there is a real protection in giving school governors frank information about the school. Full inspections recur every five or six years. The inspector in charge makes his oral report to the governors as soon as possible after the inspection is finished. Questions are asked of the headmaster at this meeting. Some months later, when the Ministry has approved it, a written report is studied by the school governors, and any matters raised in it are discussed with the headmaster. If this were a game to be played it would obviously be wise to have acquainted your school governors of problems or weaknesses beforehand or else the inspector's report might come as something of a shock. But this is no game. We believe in education, in what we are trying to do in our secondary modern school. Our governors know all that may reasonably be



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said in the space of three meetings a year and they are invited to know the school by meeting staff and children whenever they can. We are not playing educational hide-and-seek. We welcome governors and inspectors who can open our eyes to better ways or ventilate the corridors of our minds.

Eight years ago we passed from an old to a new school. My notes on the nature of equipment required have changed radically as our needs have been met. New schools have the latest equipment and we are well satisfied with it. We needed new books as well as lathes and cookers. Our old stock was out-moded and worn. The task of building new supplies of reading books for secondary modern schools is a severe one. Explanation of the difficulty has won us sympathy and support and the steadily improving library grant over the past few years pleases the school governors no less than ourselves. So does the provision of our new gymnasium. A central hall has served its limited purpose and the new building is approved. The plans have been laid before the governors. I represented the views of the teaching staff who would use it and secured what we believe are convenient modifications in siting, storage and changing space. The whole attention of our governing body was directed to securing for the school the best possible building and equipment.

School governors help to make school functions something of an occasion. What has been a truism so obvious for so long in the grammar schools can be restated with emphasis for secondary modern schools. The junior school nativity play is a novelty at first and then suddenly a tradition. Our secondary modern school plays and carol services have grown in stature similarly

and the presence of school governors at performances has done much to help. They take the platform with us on Open Days, when we come to the presentation of prizes, and receive, at that ceremony and in walking round the displays of work that precede it, evidence and enlightenment on the nature of the schooling with which they have freely associated themselves. It becomes a recognition of mutual respect between the school and its prime supporters.

We have talked about the function of the Parent-Teacher Association at our governors' meetings. Parents are far more willing to attend social occasions than educational talks. School governors have sought to strike a balance in the advice offered us. We have not encouraged social evenings as such but have made use of them to lead on to opportunities of considering problems affecting parents and teachers. The governors have heard with pleasure many reports on the generosity and goodwill of parents towards the school.

Transfers to and from grammar schools have been the subject of many questions, and the answers have helped to relieve misconceptions. It is not unknown for governors to rejoice over transfers to grammar schools in much the same way as children follow story-book heroes and heroines to the altar and accept without question the ending 'and they lived happily ever after.' The view that the grammar school place offers the only hope for children of average scholastic ability can be combatted in meetings with governors. That problem leads on naturally enough to what happens to secondary modern school leavers and the proportion seeking further education is generally approved. Work is easy to obtain at present, so our governors hear of practically

no child without employment and many with good opportunities for advancement.

Apart from learning more about us and so becoming more able to encourage us towards known aims or necessary equipment, school governors have been generous in providing prizes and have made gifts entirely unsought but highly appreciated to our science laboratory and the library. Council members of the governing body have in time past submitted themselves to questioning by the children on the work of the city council, the education committee, and the governing body itself. They have brought interested visitors from far and near to the school and have given the headmaster opportunities of speaking to wider audiences about what we are trying to do in secondary modern schools. Their enquiries have never been carping or their criticism belittling. They have worked for us and with us in the greatest educational experiment since 1902.



## XIV

### EXAMINATIONS

"O FREEDOM is a noble thing", sings the poet, but it brings obligations and the main one in the secondary modern school is to justify our belief that we can make progress without the galling spur of examinations. We were founded for this. Even of grammar schools it was hoped that external examinations would interfere as little as possible with the free exercise of the teacher's responsibility for adapting the form and content of school courses to the varying aptitudes and abilities of our pupils.

The spirit that prompted the Secondary School Examinations Council in 1947 to encourage experiment unhampered by examination guiding lines and objectives has weakened under many attacks. Grammar schools at first entered pupils for only five or six subjects at ordinary level, reserving the main subject of each pupil's course for testing after two or three years in the sixth form at advanced level. Now pupils take eight or nine subjects at ordinary level, following examination syllabuses rather than accepting the freedom to read or experiment for its educational value alone. Secondary modern schools modelling themselves too closely on grammar schools have felt that they must prove they work hard and are clever by taking examinations that represent a very scraping for results of the educational

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pot. Statistics are forthcoming of children cast aside with I.Q's of 102 or thereabouts who take five and six subjects in G.C.E. and earn terrific reputations for the schools in which such educational feats are attempted.

Two facts emerge. One is that we rely very much on examinations for educational guidance and accept the false principle that a school's work should be judged by its results in public examinations. The second is that some children are not selected for grammar school places who should be. How do these facts affect us? (The authority puts 20 per cent of its junior school leavers into the grammar schools each September.)

We take nearly one hundred and fifty boys and girls each year. They have all taken the eleven plus examination and some few have been interviewed for borderline places. We arrange them in forms and in the course of our teaching observe those whose ability, perseverance and home support recommend them for transfer to grammar schools. It is never a large number. The eleven plus examination and head teacher's list are rarely far wrong. The children suggested for transfer go to the grammar schools to take papers in English and arithmetic set by the schools, an intelligence test and a personal interview. The grammar school heads recommend, the authority considers and approves and the transfer is effected.

We are anxious to get our standards right, to set neither an impossibly high nor an unwisely low level of attainment for those we recommend for transfer. We are bewildered sometimes when we observe the high percentage of grammar school children with two, one or no passes in G.C.E. When we add those numbers

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to those of children who leave before taking the examination, we find that nearly one-third of the grammar school population, the 'C' stream element, has this result. We go a stage higher to those with three passes and realise that over 40 per cent are achieving that measure of success in G.C.E. Who then should we recommend for transfer? Where should we stop? We decide to support those who should reach an average result, not expecting that more than the exceptional one or two would develop enough with patient application to win a Training College or University place, or follow a professional calling that required a high result.

In all this we have reached conclusions that are neither common nor popular. We believe that grammar schools are being saddled with many who are not fitted by inclination or home background for academic study such as G.C.E. examinations demand. Grammar school teaching is determined by the examinations to be taken at the end of the course. It is absurd that children who have no bent for book-learning should drag on through a course that requires it and should attempt with matter that they cannot understand or digest to answer questions that are beyond their capabilities. So-called laziness may be a revolt against a way that must be academic because the course is an academic one. It may not mean that the children scoring low subject passes in G.C.E. are not reasonably intelligent but rather that they are following the wrong line.

To turn our back on a grammar school with tradition and a high reputation for university scholarships is hard. It is too hard for most of us. We want our children to go there partly in order to say that they are there and partly because we hope that they may do better than



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our saner judgment would forecast. But for what do three, two or one subjects in G.C.E. fit them? Certainly not professional careers. Then in what particular will they differ from the best boys and girls who have been working in secondary modern schools? The strongest likelihood is that they will be working at the same bench or in the same shop.

Knowing this we prefer the freedom of original work to that of external examinations. We have no doubt that if we were allowed to keep our children to sixteen plus or seventeen we could propel them through examination courses with the usual results. An especially good pupil, an exception, might score five passes. The majority would rank with their grammar school friends who probably took the examination a year earlier. They would achieve at best two or three subjects. In so doing they would have demonstrated as conclusively as their grammar school friends how unfitted for academic studies they were.

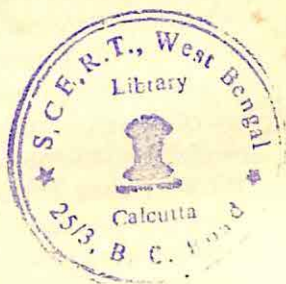
Those who leave us at fifteen to follow Further Education courses can if they wish stay on at the School of Commerce and take G.C.E. subjects voluntarily. It is a consummation of which we heartily approve. Our best teaching is not restricted to those who might be examination candidates. Our syllabuses are suited to the children by change and experiment that preserve the tried and successful matter and method yet venture to the untried and learn new ways all the time.

We have so far needed no more incentive than the good teacher and his work. When he believes in it and shows understanding of his pupils, adapting his work to their known rather than to their imaginary powers of concentration, then his class has shown itself willing

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to learn from him. He is not teaching a subject so much as teaching with imaginative sympathy and liking. His results may be unspectacular but are educational in a sense incapable of estimation by examination testing. We are not being melodramatic or sanctimonious when we say we have aims as wide as life itself. We mean it.

We have not suffered in the market for jobs because our pupils have no paper successes. They have worked with confidence to the best of their ability. They have shouldered responsibilities as prefects, captains and monitors. They have been at the top of their school and not at the bottom of it. We know they are good material. We recommend them and they do not let us down. Employers remember and come to us again. If we had purely vocational aims we could be satisfied. We try to pass on children who will see the work to which they are going as a small but necessary part of a larger world to which they have had an introduction, that will persuade them to learn more.



## XV

### TEACHER TRAINING

TO US COME STUDENTS from Training College and University to practise teaching and to observe and discuss our methods and experience. They do not come only to give set lessons, those isolated essays that take no thought of before and after. They come to live the life of the school, to be for a while a part of us. They are not set to address a perfectly poised ball with a club handed to them at just the right moment. They must learn to caddy for themselves, to settle with their classes and put them in the mood for work before the lesson begins. We seek to do away with the artificiality of avoiding contact with the bodies and minds of the pupils to be taught. We ask for a clear, long look at the job to be done before it is done.

It is hardly reasonable to expect from a beginner the powers of selection, certainty of timing and understanding of direction of the experienced teacher. There is a confidence to be won that comes slowly to many. Without that confidence the lesson, however conscientiously prepared, comes to nothing. We too lose our way sometimes for a different reason. These students are trying so hard, doing their very best. We make the mistake of asking them to teach too few lessons on their first teaching practice at too high a standard. We can tell when a student has no promise at all, or when he



is already self-assured and a ready-made asset to the profession. Not much can be done for either of these. The student without promise should be directed elsewhere immediately. His lack of scholarship and personality would commend him to no school. He would not appeal to children, nor succeed with them. They would soon cease to notice or care about what he said. The favoured student with a pleasant gift of expression, a hard-working attitude towards discipline, will grow in teaching strength almost of his own accord. In between these two there are those who will not naturally hit on to the right form of lesson to give. They need more time to learn from mistakes and to experiment. Then they may be judged by the accepted standards, but much, much later than at present.

The long over-due third year in the training college course may make it possible to have far more experiment in teaching method within the college and much more training practice in the schools. Teaching staff in colleges and schools might then have time to learn from each other to the benefit of student teachers and children. The exchanges that we consider so valuable between junior and secondary school teachers would be no less important between college and school. We have experienced series when members of a college staff with several students came in to school on occasions outside the recognised teaching practice. The model lessons were without strain. The discussions that followed each lesson covered method and material and class response. Time was allowed for full consideration of questions asked. No marks were given, no assessment made. It was genuine practice, in true conditions. We would hope that the exchange would work the other way too,

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and teachers noted for good teaching and wise grasp of their subjects might be seconded to colleges for a term while the college tutor renews his class teaching experience. It all seems so very sensible, but it is rarely if ever done.

Students come to us for their first practice within a few weeks of arriving at college. Unless they have visited the schools in their own neighbourhood first they have had little chance to acquire more than a few general precepts. We greet them sympathetically, remembering our own student days. They compile, with the class teachers' aid, a time-table that satisfies their tutors. It will show two teaching periods a day chosen from basic subjects to give opportunities for practice in narration and questioning. The student learns from the teacher what religious knowledge, English or arithmetic he will be expected to cover. He sees what aids are available and what he should provide. He prepares his lesson and shows it to his tutor, who may have many more students to visit him that same evening and must content himself with seeing that the notes are on the right lines. First they will indicate the student's aim in teaching a specific subject to a named group of children at a known age level. The student may already have made his plan of the classroom and the desks at which each child sits while he has been on his preliminary visit to the school. If not, it is done within the first day or two. After stating his aim in teaching these children, the student notes the equipment he has provided. He will go on to outline the content of his lesson. Side by side with the material will be the method he will adopt.

Sometimes we leave the student to his first lesson or else make ourselves inconspicuous at the back of the



class. We see the teacher from an angle that we had almost forgotten. We sense the normal class distractions. This part of the lesson is tedious. That was a good point, well made. We listen to his voice and are conscious how unvaried our own must be also. We mark his hold on the class's attention, see it waver and fail and perhaps recover. We know why it has happened to him. It should help us to know why it sometimes happens to us. We groan inwardly as the detail becomes more important than the whole point of the lesson. We follow its broken-backed course to the end and wonder if the student has any sense of shape or form or power to round off and conclude in any but a hurried, scrambling way. We have followed our own lessons to this point before now. We may not run through all our material so quickly, because we have learnt how to eke out a few ideas, but sometimes we own that those ideas have been too few.

We watch the student and we see ourselves. We can help him with certain teaching techniques. There is no great merit in some of them. They are not as good as inspiration, but they prevent friction and lead to smoother running for the lesson. Organising equipment, using the blackboard attractively and compellingly, employing short questions for vigour and expecting long answers for some recapitulation, ringing the changes to keep the lesson fresh, recalling attention with a word or gesture, leaving a clear picture by a cogent summary—we make these and other teaching points to the young teacher and relearn them ourselves in the process.

We do not cast the young teacher in our own image. If he has anything about him and we are honest we



will admit that he will in time make his points no less characteristically and well than we think we do. We will not therefore seek to limit his observation and practice to technicalities of teaching method but, letting him know those, will indicate the greater values in educating some who are willing and many who have no desire to learn. If the student has worked hard, enjoyed his first practice and is looking forward to the next, we can feel satisfied that a good beginning has been made.

He has not only taught, he has observed. He may not have seen set lessons of the kind he is usually expected to give, but he has watched children working singly and in groups, and studied their personalities and their minds. He has played games with them and very possibly attended school productions of plays that he has visited in rehearsal after school hours. He may have been drawn into taking part in school clubs. He has been with children in morning assembly, in the classroom, in the playground, in the school canteen. First experiences can remain in the mind a very long time. It is our job to help to make them for good and not for ill. It is perhaps easier to take that view of our responsibility towards students if our own first practice was a happy one.

A different group of students, in the fifth of their six-term course, come to us for final teaching practice. They will, by the end of the practice, have done, while in college, the minimum of sixty full days' observation and teaching. In college they will have given some model lessons to a picked class and will have heard fellow students and tutors award praise and blame for material and method. They will have studied child

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psychology and discussed and practised old and new educational methods, including the use of visual aids, tape-recorders and school broadcasts.

They are more business-like, for they have had contact with children on two previous practices, and this is their third. We expect them now to take full control of the class and teach nearly all day. In their two free periods they will not observe other lessons but will be marking or preparing their work. We stay to watch some of their lessons to offer helpful comment and to be in a position to estimate their capabilities. Tutors are no longer worrying about awkward decisions. For better or worse the student prepares his work on the lines that he has been advised to follow in each particular subject, applies to the new class the experience he has gathered from the old and awaits the assessor.

The class that he takes is another of our contributions to teacher training. A class that has been well taught will not suddenly lose its healthy discipline because a student is taking it. Happily many students realise this good fortune and are grateful to the teacher who has prepared the way. The teacher-student relationship that is right in work and temper is the prerequisite to confident, resourceful teaching.

We meet the tutors who are responsible for the students' training and the assessors who come to ensure that the final teaching mark awarded is a fair one. We gain most from, and share most with, the tutor who takes the trouble to go over with us his own findings. He has his standards and so have we. He knows the student from lecture room meetings, college life and previous practices. The background that may have puzzled us, he can supply. Some teaching is easy to

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assess, but there are students who are difficult to place. Some come with a good reputation and do not succeed with us. Others blossom and flourish like leaves on the tree. It is good to exchange views on such problems, so that not only the college tutors but also the teaching staffs are aware of the standards worked for. Finally, it is extremely helpful to be told what is the final mark agreed by the college.

So far we have been considering the training college students who come to us for teaching practice. We also have graduates who are doing their initial training year at the university. Some come for actual teaching practice and some come in groups to study our organisation and methods. The graduate in his teacher-training year has a very condensed course. He has a short time in which to study many subjects. He must study the history of the educational system in England and Wales, educational psychology and the theory of education in his general course. He has a choice of one from such subjects as education and society, education in other countries and theory and experiment in education in his special course, together with either the modern secondary school or the primary school. He can follow one of the practical courses offered in art and crafts, music, drama and physical activities and he has optional courses offered in English and arithmetic, of which he can choose one.

He has lectures and teaching practice in each of his first two terms and in his final term he will follow lectures and usually write a thesis before his examinations.

It must be obvious that with such a concentrated body of work students and tutors must somehow retain close contact with the schools or else the year will be



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sadly misspent. Not deliberately misspent, because we all know the danger, but time is short, pressure of work is heavy and sharing the growing ideas of schoolmasters may seem too burdensome, however desirable. We know how especially necessary it is for graduates to understand the work of our secondary modern schools. If they are coming from the university ultimately to work with us they must learn to understand us and share our beliefs. We can help them to do this when they come to us singly on teaching practice. The order is very much that of the training-college student, except that the graduate in his initial training year has much more to learn about teaching and life in a secondary modern school. He has, moreover, to work harmoniously with men and women whose two years of training has been vastly different from his own.

These are pressing problems as yet unsolved. We are anxious in our own school to learn all we can from initial graduate training courses so that we may in turn be helpful to students willing to work in secondary modern schools. We welcome the visits organised each term by the tutors.

For several years students doing their education year at the university have spent a morning with us studying our organisation. After an introductory talk the students visit classrooms, talk to teachers and are shown the children's work. Later we meet for questions. Invariably specialisation and discipline are discussed. These men and women are graduates. Will they be expected to teach English and arithmetic and possibly religious knowledge in addition to their specialist subject? There is always apprehension at the answer. How do we enforce discipline? Do we believe in it? They can nearly

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answer that themselves as they recount what they have seen in the various classrooms. It is usually possible to discern their opinion of our work and tone. Then they leave us and go to discuss the implications of what they have seen. No examination for secondary modern school pupils? No religious knowledge specialists? The problems met in their real setting start discussions that become teacher training.

Since the McNair Report of 1944 and the development of University Institutes of Education, attention has been given to providing further studies for maturer teachers of five years' practical experience, to enable them to rethink their educational position and to take a diploma in secondary education. This course provides us with the third group of students following teacher training.

Again there is that two-way traffic of ideas, first between experienced teachers and then with their tutors directing their study. A student on his diploma course comes to us to find out the school's social setting, and the relevance of its subject matter, methods and the conduct of the school to the needs of the children using it. We, as well as the student, have to rethink our principles, and therein lies the value of the study. We are willing all the while to see ourselves through others' eyes and to justify or change our practice and opinion according to reasoned circumstance.

A visiting teacher studying the school discusses first with me its organisation and setting and then goes on quite independently to meet staff and children and find out at first hand what is going on in the school. He notes first, perhaps, how the subject in which he is particularly interested is being taught and to what level, in all parts of the school, and then he goes on to

## TEACHER TRAINING

see work in subjects that he knows exist in his own school, but of which he may have no experience at all. He records full impressions of our school life and makes them into a substantial essay which he submits to his tutor.

Other students will have been making similar reports on other schools. Each investigator will crystallise his report under the headings of setting, curriculum and attention to his own subject. They will have had some preparation for their work by reading about the principles of curriculum building and by joining in tutorial discussions with students engaged upon similar tasks. Their leading discussion may be on some such philosophic issue as, 'In what sense should schools prepare boys and girls for life?' That will be the starting-point for their answer on how our school is attempting it. We have our share in that answer.

Again, as in training college and initial graduate training visits to us, there is room and need for exchanging the fullest possible information and for building human relationships between school, college and university on which teacher training can thrive. Meetings of headmasters, students, teachers and tutors in great variety could within a few years establish standards in advance of those at present possible. So much that seems haphazard at present could be done more efficiently with a closer degree of co-operation and understanding at all levels.

We are used for teacher training. We would like to see teacher training become a real two-way traffic of ideas and experience between the training departments and the school.



## XVI

### LEAVERS

WE HAVE COME to speak of the fourth year in a secondary modern school as if it really existed. It doesn't. Children leave at the end of the term in which they are fifteen. A child who is fifteen two days after the autumn term has started in September can leave at Christmas. One who is fifteen one day *after* the spring term has started in January is also eligible to leave school at the beginning of the Christmas holiday. One day's grace is allowed. Virtually one-third of our children leave after only three years and one term in the school.

Six months previously in May all Christmas leavers were called together to hear a preliminary survey made by the Youth Employment Officers. In this mixed school we have separate meetings of boys and girls. York factories and many firms tell the Youth Employment Officers what vacancies exist at the end of each term and indicate as far ahead as possible what opportunities might arise. There is always a demand for factory hands, shop assistants and general clerical staff in York. But many of our children are more ambitious and are seeking good apprenticeships or higher posts made available after a year or two spent in further education. It may be disappointing for a boy who has set his heart on doing joinering to be told that British

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Railways wants sheet metal workers for coach body building, but it is better to know six months in advance so that if the direction has to be changed it can be changed in time.

Our school is concerned with vocational training in only one sense. It seeks to give as sound a general education as possible. When these boys and girls come to discuss what they will be when they leave, they do so knowing that they become good workpeople by virtue of their general education as well as by this specialist interest. So when we speak of a 'change of direction in time' it does not refer to curricular changes.

The Youth Employment Officers know their work and through termly visits to school are prepared for many of the questions that will be asked. Our children assemble in the library and in a form room and our head boy and head girl, after welcoming the employment officers in the headmaster's room, take them along and introduce them to the meeting which each is to address. The employment officer speaks not only of work opportunities but also of the way to prepare for them and the kind of service that will be expected by employers. If we lay stress in school on a fair day's work for a fair's day's pay and that point is further made by the Youth Employment Officers we can hardly merit the charge of being unrealistic, especially as succeeding information about work is specific and is often given to boys and girls who through their family and friends have an idea of what to expect.

Questions are asked and answered and leads given through them to some children who had never considered certain branches of work. Children find it difficult sometimes to formulate questions, but in the

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friendly discussion which takes place most have their problems answered. Looking back we can remember how sailors, policemen, draughtsmen, printers, farm hands were helped to see what lay ahead. Girls seeking good clerical posts, nursing, advice on more advanced bakery and all the round of shop assistants posts were helped to decide after these preliminary talks. Information not readily available was sent for and passed on to them at school. There was no element of direction in this. All boys and girls were advised to look out jobs for themselves, but if they failed the Youth Employment Office would help them.

Our form teachers see their children frequently and fourth-year teachers have a responsibility in talking over jobs with end of term leavers. Formroom work includes lecturettes and discussions, and school broadcasts such as 'The World at Work' can be a valuable introduction. There are school visits to workshops and fashion parades, and there are occasionally film strips or film shows, such as the 'Aims of Industry', that can be recommended. The difficulty is that the films tend to be too advanced for the purpose that would suit us. Our school library carries all the excellent series of H.M.S.O. careers pamphlets. Sometimes the Parent-Teacher Association or an old scholar has provided just the experience that our children can understand and accept. Each child knows that everything possible towards helping him to understand the job he has chosen and preparing for it will be done by the school and the Youth Employment Officer.

'Leavers' meetings must have an unsettling influence on school work', you may say, 'during the last two terms the child is with you.' Of course they have. It



might well be that the approaching excitement of going to work might weaken the children's interest in what is being done at school. What seems to matter most in our experience is that the two interests should be kept going until the very end. Work can be devised and attacked under the guidance of determined teachers. The teacher's attitude to work has its biggest test in these last few months. We have seen children held and employed until the day they left school, more gainfully in the best sense, than they will ever probably be again. It is about the best tribute that a secondary modern headmaster could pay to members of his staff. We must be honest and add that sometimes we have seen the pace slacken and weariness take over from determination and inventiveness in face of dull indifference.

Within two months of leaving, each boy and girl is called to an interview with his parent, the Youth Employment Officer and his headmaster. The parent knows what he wishes his child to be, but is usually prepared to support him in his choice provided it is not obviously unwise. The Youth Employment Officer has been primed by the school so that he knows the child's educational standard, his health record, his school societies, hobbies and job preferred or obtained. The headmaster has the child's record card and form reports and knows his character and his bent. All seek to help the child towards his decision or, if the decision be made, to awaken interest in the next step.

Parents are invited to the interview, but before they arrive the Youth Employment Officer speaks collectively to the leavers, explaining how the National Insurance form is obtained and where his office is for future enquiries. Some of the children who have been

doing part-time employment in the evenings or at week-ends and holiday times already know about it, but for the rest it is the pass to wage earning.

Then the interviews begin. An 'A' form boy comes in with his mother. He is a fine worker at school, open and friendly in manner. His mother and he are on good terms and are agreed on his future. He has taken the further education examination, which is not of any high standard, and he should certainly expect to go to the Technical College for one year with joinering as his chief interest. Should he not be accepted for the course he would want to come back to school. As he is in his last term at school the authority allows him to attend evening school for three nights a week. He takes practical subjects and English and maths. on the third evening. Has he any time for recreation? Yes, he is taking dancing lessons and his mother supplies a few interesting personal details as the interview ends. The Youth Employment Officer will see him again at the end of the technical course which he will most certainly take. He will make a fine workman and will have our strongest recommendation in support of his application for jobs.

The next interview is with a 'D' form boy and his mother. To his embarrassment she insists on describing his childhood's nervousness and backwardness. He has always wanted to be near home, working in familiar surroundings with those he knows. His school record shows him to be cheerful, more energetic on the games field than in the form room and showing signs of improved control in metalwork. His choice of becoming a British railways blacksmith seems reasonable. His second choice would be to work temporarily as a

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labourer at Rowntree's or Terry's factory until a vacancy for his job occurred on British railways. It would appear that his chances are fair, as his father is a railwayman and has taken the precaution of putting down his son's name in advance, very much as he might have done had he wanted him to go to Eton. He has had no further need to attend the Child Guidance Clinic since his junior school days. He goes out to the pictures once a week and on other evenings stays at home and plays darts.

All day the interviews go on. At the end we know we have given the best advice we could and have clarified some matters. Our school reports give full information and comment twice a year. Parents therefore know clearly what standard of work has been reached and do not usually aim at too distant targets. The tally of recreational activity grows. Evening school provides familiar ground for several boys, as it is held in our own school. Youth clubs, A.T.C., R.E.M.E., cadets and Sea Scouts attract those who wish for company away from home, but the home still supplies the centre and control for many of our pupils' evening activities and that is a very good thing.

The girls have their interviews on a different day, but they follow the same pattern. There is the introductory talk to all for ten minutes and then we interview each girl with her parent. Generally mothers come to the interviews, as that seems to be most convenient, but fathers make arrangements with their employers where they feel they ought to be present. Where the school has a friendly relationship with parents and makes them really welcome to their functions it is easier to persuade them to come for this important interview. Few attend



## LEAVERS

in any carping or disgruntled spirit. Most understand that we are trying to help.

Here is a 'C' form girl with her mother. As soon as introductions have been made the pattern becomes clear. The girl has a job in mind and has to call to see the manager of a good shop in a week's time. She thinks she can do the work. She can. Her school record shows variable concentration but good speech and willing behaviour. Then her mother poses the question that is on our tongues. Will she be strong enough? She started late in the junior school and has required medical attention for ailments largely occasioned by nerves. What about standing on her feet all day? The job is a good one, but we advise another medical report. The mother and daughter see their doctor, who is satisfied. The girl takes the school's confidential report to her interview and is appointed. We have given full information and advice to the parent who has acted on it and there is every chance that the girl will do well.

The next girl to be interviewed has taken the further education examination, as her parents agree that an extra year would be beneficial. She is a 'B' form girl of average ability. If there are a reasonable number of places available she will certainly go to the School of Commerce, but there is a doubt concerning her ability to do it first time. What will she do if she has not been accepted? Her mother asks if it is possible to return to school for a while. We explain that it is, that the examination can be taken again at the end of the next term or, if a suitable job appears, the girl can leave at any time during the term. She will be over fifteen and will have the right to leave school whenever she wishes. This pleases both mother and daughter. The ultimate

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aim is nursing and both know how much general education matters as preparation for the nursing course. As a safeguard, in case the girl does not succeed in obtaining further education, we seek an alternative prospect and find work in a large office, meeting people, a sound second choice.

These four examples from 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' forms give a limited but fair picture of our leavers' interviews. The girls are as clear as the boys in making their choice of jobs and many are applying independently after having the benefit of the Youth Employment Officer's advice. We emphasise that they are not being directed. We discourage blind following after companions and try to make each child choose for itself the job that will give him self-fulfilment and opportunity.

Girls speak of home interests such as reading, drawing, sewing, and learning the piano. Some go to Youth Clubs, the Youth Choir, Guides and the Girls' Friendly Society and St. John Ambulance Classes. Others attend evening school. Dancing lessons, swimming and part-time work were also mentioned. There was evidence of a full busy life outside school, at its best where the home was the centre and genial censor.

Some of the points that stand out in our minds after the interviews are over can be grouped under five headings: ability, personality, health, home circumstances and the nature of the work sought.

Where a child is obviously able and should go on to further education we recommend that course strongly. Other prospects are always taken into account and there is a standard of self-appraisal that is both honest and forthright. Many children of good bearing and personality shine at an interview and will be well placed



## LEAVERS

even although their ability may be of very modest standard. They have a natural brightness of speech, manner and movement that would commend them to shop managers and customers and none of them are incapable of learning the elements of their job or are likely to fail in giving change. Health doubts are freely discussed. Parents know in most cases how able their children are, but all show sensible concern for jobs that their children can stand up to. They recognise that their child may be emotionally unstable or unfitted through long-drawn-out ailments for strenuous work. They are willing to accept jobs that will bring lower pay into the household rather than that their children should be strained. Sometimes from their own experience of work, especially some factory work, they say they wouldn't wish their child to work under those conditions. They sought good companions and good influence for their children when they sent them to school. They want work where that influence can be continued.

Home circumstances create occasional antagonisms between parent and child during our interviews. The worst have been when resentment has been shown by each; by the parent through disappointment that their son is only fitted for a labouring job, when they have a position to maintain, by the son out of embarrassment that this matter should be raised in public, as it were, and in contradiction of wishes that would force him into a job for which he has neither skill nor inclination. Parents are sometimes selfish, as those were who wished to remain at work themselves and so committed their daughter to the home to prepare meals for them and younger children at school. Or children are difficult.



## LEAVERS

A girl has set her mind on dancing and will claim at the interview that boredom, discomfort and moral danger mean nothing to her if only she can get an engagement with a touring group who do seaside shows in the summer months. Happily perhaps her dancing did not take her far enough to win such a precarious employment. And there are those who are determined, as were two girls recently who wanted, one to be a nurse and the other a grocer's assistant and nothing else would do.

Naturally enough safeguards are sought. 'We want him in a trade', is the straight demand, and at the moment it can be largely met. We remind parents and children what apprenticeship involves. Further education, comprising a day each week at the Day Continuation School or time spent at evening school, is readily accepted as an indispensable condition of advancement.

We are aware all this while that these boys and girls are passing through stages of adolescence. Experienced and sympathetic teachers can best help children through this most difficult period by respecting their increased sensitiveness in physical appearance. It is a time of mental and emotional disturbance. Our children can be led, but not driven, fairly rebuked but not made fun of. Once pushed into a position where stubbornness or sullenness seems the only defence, because they are inarticulate, children can with difficulty be brought to do their best work. Patience, toleration, encouragement are the best tools the teacher can employ. Industry and commerce might learn from the schools.

I was once asked at an Advisory Council Meeting on Occupational Health, 'How keen are young people and what do they want to know?' I gave a list of the

## LEAVERS

questions a fourth-year group at school had raised and said they were very keen indeed. They were eager to start work. They wanted to prepare for it. They wanted to be asked to respond with something they could give. They wanted something responsible to do and they were looking forward to new experiences. So often they were disappointed. The reality offered repetitive work at a fast pace with few developing skills. There seemed to be neither encouragement nor future and certainly not enough advance information about the detail of the work to be done or the conditions to be met with in the workshop or factory.

I was also asked whether the sudden change from school to work was a bad thing and whether some more gradual process might be advantageous. We discussed the possibility of children working half time for their last term at school and rejected it. Our experience at school was all in favour of the present system. It could be greatly strengthened by the gradual introduction of boys and girls to their new work, with freedom from adult talk of a low kind and with care of health and encouragement towards responsible attitudes foremost in each firm's aims. Better workpeople would justify better attention. It need not be a welfare state dream. That was my reply.

In that spirit we approach our leavers' problems each term and our records show that our method is not far wrong. We urge our children to do a fair day's work for a fair day's pay, to have justifiable ambition and to look for fair treatment. Our leavers are good material.

## CONCLUSION

OUR INFANT SCHOOLS deserve their reputation. They receive the children with rare understanding and prepare them for a school life that stretches at least ten years ahead. They have tried and proven ways. The junior school has the major task in the public mind of seeing children through to the appropriate secondary course. Their curriculum and methods have been tested over many years and some of the results can be seen on honours boards. Grammar schools have earned their high place. They teach their best pupils well up into the first year of university studies. The leading professions, business and industry draw their staff from boys and girls who have done well at the grammar school. The paths of progress to ordinary, advanced and scholarship level have been so well trodden as to represent highways that can be easily discerned and justly appreciated. Commercial, Technical and Art schools have courses that are to a large degree vocational and therefore their purpose is clear.

All of these schools educate and do it well. They have a purpose and achieve a result. Hard thinking and hard effort go into every day's work. Yet it would be true to say that no harder work and no more original thinking has been done anywhere than in secondary modern schools since their establishment just over ten years ago. It would be equally true to say that this has never been realised by the public. It is driving many



## CONCLUSION

secondary modern schools, mistakenly as I think, to seek recognition and esteem by creating within their schools examination streams and by entering pupils for external examinations.

We have a clear enough purpose. It is to take each child educationally as far as it can go—that means striving after true standards—and not neglect body and spirit. We do that, but because we have no examination results to show no other results can be seen. I will try to bring some of them within view of willing eyes.

Through the able work of our neighbouring primary schools the children who reach us are literate. Many are slow or even backward for the usual reasons of health, broken schooling, heredity and environment. They speak badly, read with little understanding, set their work down unintelligibly and resist attention. We work, as our primary school colleagues before us have done, to build confidence and win co-operation. We have our minor successes. Visitors tell us how well the children respond to questions and how eager they are to explain what they are doing or writing, even if it is not very good. With no other incentives than the highest—the desire to do their best for the children in our school—my teachers try every known method until at last there is something to build on. Suddenly a child who had no fluency in reading and writing finds himself able to do a little better and the improvement begins. There are those who say that these children should be turned out of school at fourteen to the labouring jobs for which alone they are fitted. That is not my view. Their work improves and so do they.

They are in our school during the most trying period of emotional and physical development in their lives.

## CONCLUSION

As we have such a large proportion of children of secondary school age in our modern schools it stands to reason that we must expect most of the problems. Some of the children in difficulty because of emotional disturbance during adolescence have no strong support out of school and depend very much upon the care and help that we can give them. I have in mind several cases of children who were steered clear of juvenile court proceedings by the practical sympathy of teachers who made them work and gave them good advice. I can think of many cases of children with no training in courtesy or consideration who have learnt something of both before they have left us. The protection that we offer in school is continued with good effect in Junior Evening Schools and Youth Clubs. The public may think of secondary modern schools as breakwaters rather than lighthouses, but they should admit that because of us there are calmer waters ahead.

If we aim to improve work and behaviour we also offer our children the chance of acquiring a sense of responsibility. Senior pupils in grammar schools at 17 or 18 years will be prefects, captains of games or leaders of school societies. It would seem that the hierarchy in comprehensive schools will hardly come from the pupils leaving at fifteen. In the secondary modern school we have our opportunity and our pupils respond well to it. They are ready for responsibility and enjoy it, misusing their power sometimes but learning to assume care of a class or cloakroom with practice. They become smarter in appearance and walk with befitting dignity. They have a new sense of power in their developing physical condition; they have experienced using their authority in school games and clubs. We are in a posi-

## CONCLUSION

tion to tone down the over-exuberant and strengthen the nervous or uncertain. They are learning control over their speech, movement, opinions and feelings, each an education in itself. They are taking the first steps in self discipline.

There is a very wide range of ability in our school, but we have no difficulty in thinking of ourselves as a community. The quicker children naturally supply our leaders, but all have encouragement for the part they will play in our school life. It has become fairly usual to find 'C' form boys and girls winning handicraft and housecraft prizes on Open Day. Three years ago the outstanding work presented at our Drama Festival was Form 4C's choral speaking, with movement, of 'The Forsaken Merman'. We find boys and girls from all forms playing in teams together, singing in the choir, acting in plays or working side by side in school societies. A leader or a character, whatever his form, is soon known and appreciated throughout the school. There are many opportunities of showing loyalty to companions, teachers, houses and school, and many occasions of responsible behaviour as visiting teams or groups on educational visits, when we hope to be a credit to the school. In the morning and in the end of term assemblies we meet as a whole to say our prayers. We consider our behaviour, hear views of general interest and see ourselves bodily as a school.

We seek a relationship between teacher and child that will last throughout the day and inform the future. We try to turn discipline into self-discipline. There are times when mastery must be established in a resolute way. Whenever that happens we make sure that justice is seen to be fair.



## CONCLUSION

We demand the highest standard of work of which the children are capable. Seven out of every ten children leaving the primary schools continue their education in the secondary modern school. We take them as they are and try to help them to develop a right attitude to work, to people and to themselves. Critics make rare play with our children's educational ability, with their behaviour, taste and manners. They exaggerate, of course, and their exaggerations fall on willing ears. We can say with truth that some of our children are the equal in what the public easily recognises as educational ability of some children already benefiting from the prestige accorded grammar school education. We can say that in character, effort, bearing and disposition we have many children who will prove to be the decent citizens playing leading parts in factories, offices and shops. We have children of lower educational and social status who merit no less attention than any other child in any other kind of school. Only devoted service from our teachers can help these children. A modern poet, J. P. Fletcher, in his *Unprofitable Journey* recognises what can happen:

She gave him scope of words, to the queer symbol  
Of print a meaning nearing onto heaven  
For his mind angel-hungry. By example  
Brought him to rare integrities, dispossessing  
Child-native sadism, building every feature  
To its particular betterment, by-passing  
With new enchantments the old Adam nature.  
It was no small achievement to have given  
So gross a mite this wonder. His untaught spirit  
No longer satisfied with the brute encumbrance  
Of squalid ignorance, refused to bear it,

## CONCLUSION

And in revolt, as from obscure remembrance  
Of a dead heritage, feasted with a vivid  
Live-eyed hunger on the news she told him  
Till the dark roads knew flowers and a fervid  
Admiration of all beauty held him.

Let us make all allowance for the imagination in this poem that sees the divine result following too surely upon the unsparing effort of devoted teaching. Nevertheless where such devoted teaching exists in the schools, results will some day flow. We have seen it happen here.

It is the intention of this book to pay tribute to secondary modern teachers in this and every school. No social prestige attends our efforts. New schools and new equipment have lent strength to our work, but our main strength must come from the spirit with which we approach our work and the belief that remains in us after years of hard striving in the face sometimes of ridicule and often of doubt.

We are preparing children not for examinations but for life. We teach facts. We seek to establish values. We work hard and long believing that what we are doing is as important in the fullest sense as teaching potential state scholars. We go to bed tired. We rise to face another day. We go into our morning assembly. We look around. Incentives? Here before us are five hundred incentives.

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